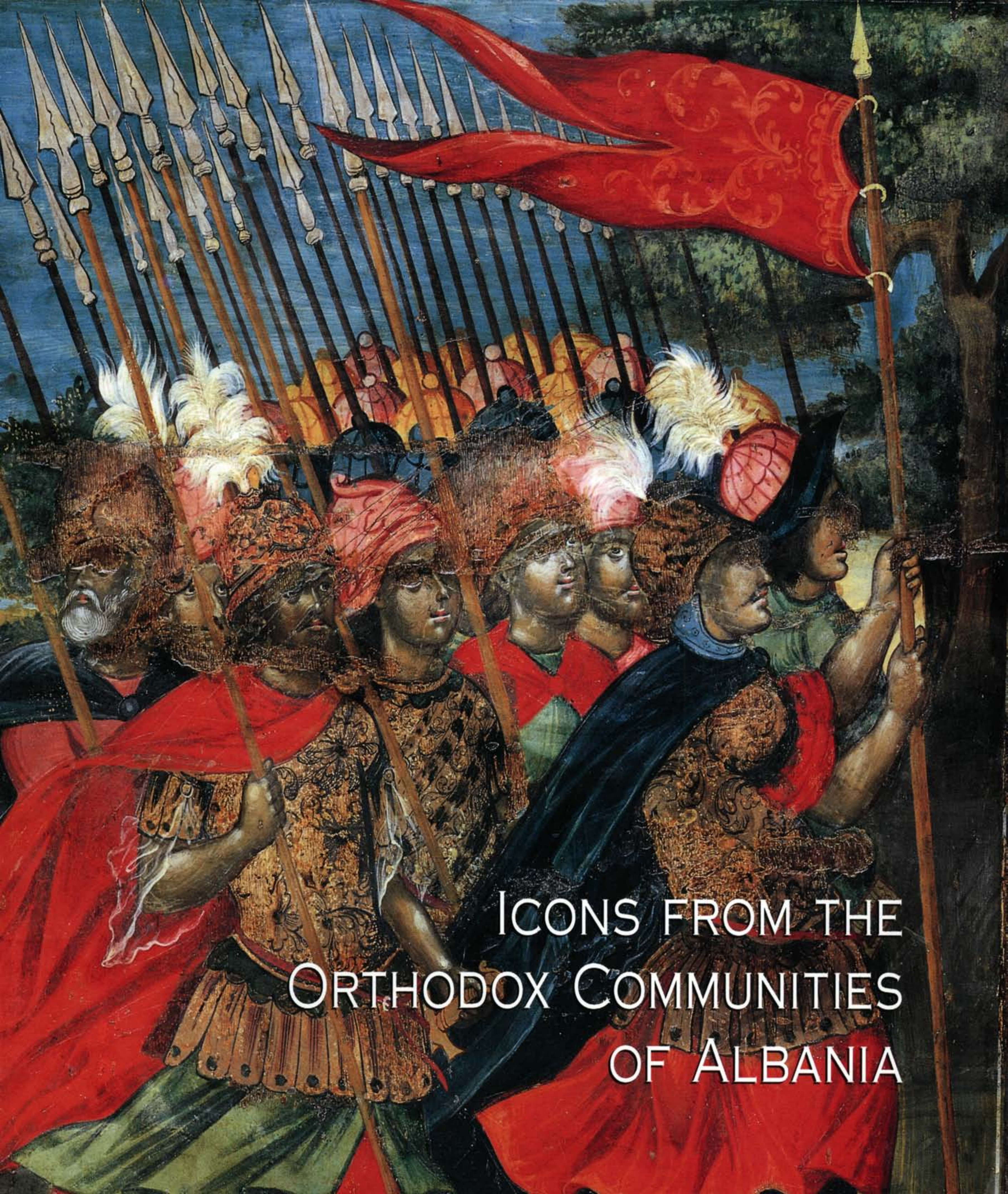


Icons from the Orthodox Communities of Albania

Icons from the Orthodox Communities of Albania

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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MINISTRY OF CULTURE
MUSEUM OF BYZANTINE CULTURE

ICONS FROM THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITIES OF ALBANIA

COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MEDIEVAL ART, KORCË

EDITOR: Dr. ANASTASIA TOURTA
INTRODUCTION: PANAYOTIS L. VOCOTOPOULOS
AUTHOR OF THE CATALOGUE: EUGENIA DRAKOPOULOU

Thessaloniki
14 March - 12 June 2006

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR BYZANTINE
AND POST-BYZANTINE MONUMENTS

PROGRAMME OF CONSERVATION AND DISPLAY OF ICONS OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MEDIEVAL ART, KORCË

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The exhibition "Icons from the Orthodox Communities of Albania. Collection of the National Museum of Medieval Art, Korcë", held at the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, is an event of great importance from many points of view, over and above its visual interest. The exhibition is the crowning achievement of a programme of inter-state collaboration between the Museum of Byzantine Culture, the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments, and the National Museum of Medieval Art of Korcë, which has been completed with great success: a five-year programme at many levels, covering the spheres of conservation, training, academic research and museum presentation, it was carried out entirely in the excellent Museum of Byzantine Culture, which has recently been awarded the Council of Europe Museum Prize.

During these five years a good number of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine icons of outstanding artistic and historical importance from the Korcë Museum were conserved in exemplary fashion: conservators from the Albanian museum were trained in new methods and technologies in icon-conservation; an imaginative exhibition was mounted, presenting the conserved icons -with the aid of technology- in the context of the monuments and their places of origin; finally, the present, tasteful catalogue was compiled, the content of which makes a contribution to academic research. The achievement of all the above was made possible by the harmony, inspiration and zeal with which many people from both sides worked together.

The programme is important from many points of view: it has contributed to the preservation of works of art of the Byzantine heritage, which is a substantial component of European civilisation; it has promoted collaboration between the two countries in the sphere of culture, through the transfer of the relevant technical expertise to our neighbours; and it has enhanced the -historically rooted- role played by Thessaloniki in the Balkans as a reference point of culture and development, since the two Greek institutions involved in the programme -the Museum of Byzantine Culture and the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments- are based in this city.

In the restless world of today, collaborative ventures of this kind promote the unifying role of culture as a sure channel of communication and mutual understanding. Endeavours of this nature should therefore be encouraged and continue.

GEORGIOS VOULGARAKIS
Minister of Culture



Contents

Foreword 10
NIKOS ZIAS
Professor of the Athens University
President of the Board of Directors, European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments

Programme of Conservation and Display of Icons from the National Museum of Medieval Art, Korcë, the Chronicle of a Collaboration 12
DR. ANASTASIA TOURTA
Director of the Museum of Byzantine Culture

National Museum of Medieval Art, Korcë 15
LORENC GLOZHENI
Director of the National Museum of Medieval Art, Korcë

Map showing the provenance of the icons 17

Religious Painting in Albania from the 10th to the 19th century 18
PANAYOTIS L. VOCOTOPOULOS
Professor emeritus of the University of Athens
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The Study of the Icons from the Collection of the National Museum of Medieval Art, Korcë, Preface 26
EUGENIA DRAKOPOULOU
Research associate Professor, Institute of Neohellenic Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation

Catalogue 30
EUGENIA DRAKOPOULOU
Entries 1-72

Abbreviations - Bibliography 203

Index of the Artists 206

FOREWORD

To the exhibition
«Icons from the Orthodox Communities of Albania.
Collection of the National Museum of Medieval Art, Korcë»

Over its centuries-long history, the Byzantine empire was a multi-national state whose administrative system was based on the Roman legal tradition, and in which the main cohesive links were the Orthodox Church and -from the 6th century onwards- the Greek language.

In line with this ecumenical dimension of the Byzantine empire, the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments (ECBPM), a Legal Entity of Public Law under the supervision of the Greek Ministry of Culture and in collaboration with UNESCO, the Council of Europe and other European and International Bodies, is broadening its horizon to include the study and care of Byzantine monuments preserved throughout the entire space to which the Byzantine empire extended from time to time, or which was exposed to its artistic influence. The main thrust of this objective is to make a contribution to the study, preservation and projection of this cultural heritage, which is of such great value to the entire world. The further aim is to help to link together the individual peoples that are heirs to this tradition, within their own national borders, of course. This contribution is particularly important in that it is achieved through works of art that give form to the most profound stirrings of the soul, and especially of religious art, which is a response to its existential questions.

The exhibition of Icons from the Orthodox communities of Albania from the collection of the National Museum of Medieval Art in Korcë, which is held in the splendid Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, is an event characteristic of this vision.

The icons from the Korcë Museum selected by Dr. Anastasia Tourta, Director of the Museum of Byzantine Culture and member of the Board of Directors of the ECBPM -who travelled many times to Albania to this aim-, were conserved in the modern, excellently equipped laboratories of the Museum in Thessaloniki by Museum conservators, under the supervision of the conservator Dimitra Lazidou, and by Albanian conservators training in modern techniques and methods.

The benefits accruing from the enterprise were the training of conservators, the use of advanced technology for research, and, finally, the conservation of eighty-eight icons of Byzantine style dating from the 14th to the 19th century. The icons bear Greek inscriptions, providing further evidence for the cohesive power of the Orthodox religion and the Greek language, and of Greek education and culture in general, in this region during both the Byzantine and the Post-Byzantine period.

This endeavour is not an isolated event in Albania. The ECBPM, in collaboration with Anastasios, the Archbishop of Tiranë and all Albania, is restoring the church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Zervati, a project that is nearing completion.

It is our hope that the collaboration on the preservation of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments in Albania will continue and be expanded.

The activities of the ECBPM also extend to other Balkan countries (Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Bulgaria), as well as to Middle-Eastern countries (Jordan, Syria, and Palestine), combining scientific research (e.g. excavations), with rescue interventions (e.g. conservation of mosaics) and education (University of Damascus).

At the purely academic research level, we may note, by way of example, the creation of a database on the Byzantine Monuments included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, the research programmes carried out in collaboration with the University of Princeton on the role played by architecture in paintings, which will lead to a major exhibition entitled "Architecture as Icon", and the "Anna Komnini" programme of electronic archiving, in the context of the Information Society.

The ECBPM feels that through these activities it is paying, on behalf of Greece, part of its debt to the study, preservation and projection of the Byzantine heritage in its ecumenical dimension, since it enjoys the good fortune, and also the responsibility, of keeping alive the two main cohesive links of Byzantium: Orthodoxy and the Greek language.

Professor NIKOS ZIAS
President of the Board of Directors,
European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments

Programme of Conservation and Display of Icons from the National Museum of Medieval Art, Korcë, the Chronicle of a Collaboration

The exhibition "Icons of the Orthodox Communities of Albania. Collection of the National Museum of Medieval Art, Korcë" brings icons from our neighbour to Greece for the first time. The icons come from the central and southern, preeminently Orthodox regions of the country, and cover a chronological span of six centuries, from the 14th to the 19th, offering a panorama of the religious painting that developed in these areas.

The icons of the 14th-15th century are mainly from the area of Korcë, from the hermit's retreats at Great Prespa. A distinctive kind of monasticism developed here at this period and retreats were built in inaccessible caves on the lakeside. Many of these retreats are still preserved in both the Greek and the Albanian section of the lake. The icons, and also the wall-paintings that adorn them, are ascribed to the activity of workshops at Kastoria and Ohrid, and some of them reflect the Palaeologan art of Constantinople. After the conquest of the state of tsar Samuel by the emperor Basil II, the autocephalous archdiocese of Ohrid was founded in 1019/20, centred initially on Prespa and later on Ohrid. In Byzantine times, it was an advanced outpost of imperial diplomacy in the Slav world, and its spiritual leaders were men of learning who were sent here from Constantinople.

The provenance of the Post-Byzantine icons in the exhibition covers a wide geographical range, the northernmost boundary of which is Tiranë. They attest to the continuity of the Byzantine tradition in the religious painting of the Balkans after the establishment here of the Ottoman Turks, with Orthodox Christianity serving as an element unifying the subjugated peoples. They also reveal the ease with which painting trends and schools were disseminated, and the mobility and travels of painters within the vast area of the Ottoman empire. They emphasise the authority and prestige throughout the Orthodox world of Mount Athos, with some of the icon painters working at the monasteries there, and also the wide circulation of Cretan icons, some of which travelled as far as the Balkan hinterland. The Greek inscriptions on the icons, some of them very long, provided valuable factual and prosopographical evidence and emphasise the power of the Greek language -the language of the Church and scholarship- amongst painters, commissioners, and recipients of icons, irrespective of their nationality.

The exhibition sets the seal on the five-year programme of collaboration between the Museum of Byzantine Culture and the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments, and the National Museum of Medieval Art of Korcë.

This programme, which is a paradigm of inter-state, cross-border collaboration, as its successful completion demonstrates, was set in motion and completed thanks to the shared perception, will, enthusiasm, and desire to participate and contribute, of a group of individuals from both the Greek and the Albanian side. It owes its start to the inspiration of a man who possesses a heightened awareness of his mission: the General Consul of Greece in Korcë in 1999, a very difficult time for our neighbours, who were experiencing the consequences of the war of Kosovo. It was to Nikolaos Garilidis, then General Consul of Greece in Korcë, that the Director of the National Museum of Medieval Art first turned, seeking help to save 6,500 icons in his museum. Garilidis took administrative action and, through his authority and the confidence enjoyed in him by the personnel of the Korcë Museum, cultivated the idea of collaboration, allayed the museum director's fears about taking the icons to Thessaloniki, and supported the programme in every possible way, particularly during its first, difficult steps.

The programme of collaboration, approved by the responsible Ministries of Culture of the two countries, began with a pilot project. This involved the conservation of 88 icons from the Korcë Museum in the laboratories of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, the training of conservators from the Albanian museum, and the organisation of an exhibition with the conserved icons. The icons were selected by the undersigned on the basis of their antiquity and artistic value, the extent to which their state of preservation was critical, the degree to which they were representative of schools and trends of painting, and their potential interest to the Greek public. The icons were taken in four stages to Thessaloniki. During the five years that their conservation lasted, the conservators of the Korcë Museum -graduates of the Advanced School of Fine Arts at Tiranë with no expert knowledge of conservation- had the opportunity to follow and participate in various stages of icon-conservation, thanks to a rolling programme of visits to Thessaloniki, with two conservators at a time spending periods of two months there.

Thanks to the high level of training and the experience of the conservators of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, and also to the specialised technical equipment of its laboratories, hidden 'secrets' of the icons that were not visible to the naked eye were revealed, the problems from which each was suffering were diagnosed, and the appropriate conservation method was selected. In order to deal with the special problems, the Museum collaborated with distinguished Greek institutions in the sphere of the investigation of artworks, such as the Physical and Chemical Methods and Techniques Laboratory of the Department of the Conservation of Antiquities and Artworks in the Athens Advanced Technical Institute, the Ormylia Diagnostic Centre for Artworks of the Holy Coenobium of the Annunciation at Ormylia, Chalkidiki, and the Materials Analysis Laboratory of the "Demokritos" Nuclear Physics Centre [EKEPHE]. Thanks to the programmes of the General Secretariat of Research and Technology of the Ministry of Development, the Museum carried out a supplementary programme devoted to the "Technical Investigation of Post-Byzantine icons in the National Museum of Medieval Art in Korcë by non-destructive methods". All the above will be published in a bilingual (Greek and Albanian) handbook on which the Museum conservators are working, which will give detailed descriptions of the procedures for diagnosing, conserving and restoring the icons of the Korcë Museum. I believe that, given the lack of a relevant bibliography in Albanian, this will be a useful tool for the conservators of the Korcë Museum and for others besides, and will bring the programme of conservation to completion.

The programme was beneficial for everyone at many levels. The conservators of the Korcë Museum,

in addition to receiving up-to-date information and training in conservation matters, had the opportunity to work in a contemporary museum, to form an awareness of its activities as a whole, and to appreciate the interdependence and collaboration between its main sectors -that is conservation, preservation and storage, and display. For their part, the conservators of the Thessaloniki Museum broadened the horizons of their experience by dealing with conservation problems that were a new challenge for them. As we conserved these sorely-tried icons, many of which still bear the marks of the public fires to which they were condemned by the storm of the 'cultural revolution' of 1967 in our neighbouring country, we all recalled once more that a museum struggles against time and oblivion, that it is a place that preserves and protects memory. For, during the conservation process, we often felt that we were touching the stories of men of the past, as, from the rotting wood and burnt polish, there emerged figures of saints, names of painters, and the supplications of donors, 'The Lady of the Angels', 'the hand of Onouphrios of Cyprus'... 'Markos, thy servant and fervent suppliant', and exhortations 'remember kindly'.

The most important achievement of the programme was in the field of human relations, since our shared efforts in a joint cause provided an opportunity to overcome mutual prejudices and reservations, to create ties and a precious store of confidence and trust that I believe will be maintained in the future.

The programme -which all the signs suggest will be repeated with other Balkan countries- justified two of the founding aims of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, to become a reference point for matters involving the safeguarding, investigation and study of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine culture, and to build cultural bridges with countries with which we are bound by the substratum of the ecumenical Byzantine civilisation.

DR. ANASTASIA TOURTA
Director of the Museum of Byzantine Culture

National Museum of Medieval Art, Korcë

The National Museum of Medieval Art opened in 1980 and is located in Korcë, the largest town in south-east Albania situated some 180 kilometres from the capital, Tiranë, and 30 kilometres from the border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The numerous exhibits and other objects belonging to its collections are historical, cultural and artistic treasures of the medieval period and are associated mainly with the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine cultural heritage. The artefacts, made of stone, metal, wood, cloth, paper, etc. are representative of the artistic wealth and complex values of the region and project, inter alia, the indigenous nature and integrity of the Albanian nation through the language of art.

As a result of the circumstances under which it was created, the collection is one of the largest in existence in Albania. It contains 6,500 items rivalling in quality the works of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine art created in those of Albania's neighbours that formed part of the Byzantine empire. In 1967, the dictatorship, in the name of communist atheism, prohibited all forms of religious expression and closed all houses of worship accommodating the different religions. Abandoned to the mercy of fate, many important religious buildings were destroyed, burned down, looted or abandoned, along with their contents. This difficult period may be regarded as one of the most savage periods of 20th-century Albanian iconoclasm. It was under these circumstances, a few years later, that a group of intellectuals, scholars, restorers and academicians managed, at great personal risk, to assemble some of the surviving treasures of these institutions, primarily icons, together with a variety of other religious objects, thereby preventing them from being lost or destroyed. These objects were then placed in the former cathedral of the town, which was converted into a Museum, in which they remain to this day. It is not known with any certainty whether the number of items lost was greater than that of those salvaged, though this is entirely credible, nevertheless the preservation of this precious heritage, which is now safely kept and properly studied, represents a courageous, civilised act by those who rescued it and created the National Museum of Medieval Art.

The main activities of the National Museum of Medieval Art include the display and public promotion of the objects, their protection, conservation and restoration, research and academic work, and also national activity. The Museum possesses a permanent exhibition gallery in which are displayed about 200 artworks, a number of research and conservation laboratories, storerooms, and a simple system for controlling the atmosphere. It employs dozens of workmen, specialists, conservators, managers and scientists. The present exhibition displays a sample of the most important works of various periods and artists,

some named and others anonymous. Amongst them, we may single out icons of the 13th and 14th century and masterpieces executed by leading painters such as Onouphrios, Nikolaos, Onouphrios of Cyprus, Konstantinos the Teacher, Konstantinos the hieromonk, Konstantinos of Spatheia, David of Selenitza, and the Tzetiris brothers, a family of painters from Korcë, as well as other pieces created by painters who worked in Albania and elsewhere.The National Museum of Medieval Art is visited by a significant number of art-lovers, travellers, as well as local and foreign students. It is accordingly an undisputed point of reference for researchers, historians, theologians and Byzantinists from all parts of the globe. The Museum enjoys artistic and academic relations with many similar institutions in the Balkans and Europe in general. It exploits its own collections and also collaborates with various Albanian art galleries and institutions in the organisation of international exhibitions in France, Germany, Italy and elsewhere.

The Korcë National Museum of Medieval Art, the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, and the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments have for many years engaged in a unique programme of academic collaboration that has recently been concluded and crowned with complete success. This demonstrates in the best possible manner that when mutual goodwill, understanding and enthusiasm are put before unjustified social and political differences, no artificial barrier can stand before the bridges of the ecumenical messages linked with art. This collaboration also cultivates co-operation in the effort to encourage material and cultural values in a more global, varied and multi-cultural European space, while at the same time preserving the identity and authenticity of these values.

Noteworthy amongst the mutual influences and obligations arising from this joint venture are the comparison and exchange of experience in matters relating to management, study and administration, the improvement of technical specifications, the materials and methods of conservation, the organisation of exhibitions, the publication of catalogues and the establishment of ongoing relationships with a view to future collaboration.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking:

Eftychia Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou, Director of the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments, for her generous assistance.

Anastasia Tourta, Director of the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, for her part in the joint organisation of the programme.

My thanks also, to the experts of both these museums who contributed, with such dedication and professionalism to the success of this venture.

LORENC GLOZHENI

Director of the National Museum of Medieval Art, Korcë



Map showing the provenance of the icons

Religious Painting in Albania
from the 10th to the 19th century

The medieval painting of Albania has not been investigated to the same degree as architecture or sculpture contemporary with it, and a large part of the relevant material is practically unknown. No wall-paintings of any note dating from the Middle Byzantine (9th-12th century) period have been located to date. The finest 13th-century wall-paintings are to be found in northern Albania, the most important of them being the wall-paintings dated to 1272 from the Monastery of the Saviour, a Benedictine foundation at Rubik, north of Kroja. On the semidome above the apse is a depiction of the Deisis with the founder, a Catholic bishop or abbot, rendered on a small scale, offering a model of the church to Christ enthroned. The Annunciation is preserved to left and right, on the front of the apse. The Communion of the Apostles is painted in an intermediate zone lower down, and in the lowest zone are frontal saints, some of whom wear the mitre and hold a bishop's staff of Latin type. Although the inscriptions are in Latin, the willowy, stooping apostles of the Communion, with their identical postures, are of purely Byzantine style, and the restless drapery of their garments recalls the so-called dynamic style of the late 12th century.[1] In northern Albania at this period, wall-paintings of Byzantine style are found adorning churches with Romanesque architecture. An exception is formed by the wall-paintings of a church at Zejmen near Lesh, where the bulky, individual saints wearing the typical clothing of Franks exhibit a close affinity with Romanesque painting.

From the end of the 13th century onwards larger numbers of more important wall-paintings are found in the Orthodox churches in areas of southern Albania. The extensive remains of the painted decoration of the triconch refectory in the Monastery of the Virgin at Apollonia are usually dated to the last twenty years of the 13th century. Very few monastery refectories preserve painted decoration dating from the Byzantine period, and the refectory at Apollonia is the most important, from this point of view, after the refectory of the monastery on Patmos. The decoration is divided into three zones, as is frequently the case in churches. The bottom zone is occupied by an array of full-length saints, with scenes drawn from the gospels in the top zone, while the middle zone has scenes on the east side and medallions with saints on the north and south (no wall-paintings are preserved on the west side). Most of the scenes are related to readings or hymns for Lent. Only fragments of wall-painting are preserved in the katholikon of the monastery, a cross-in-square church with a large dome. On the east wall of the exonarthex is a wall-painting, preserved in very poor condition, of Michael VIII Palaeologos, with the appellation New Constantine (also found elsewhere), his son Andronikos II, his grandson Michael IX, and members of the imperial family, offering a model of the church to the Virgin.[2] The representation has been dated to 1281/2.

The blackened wall-paintings executed in fine-quality art in the church of the Holy Trinity at Berat probably go back to the first quarter of the 14th century. An inscription on the south wall of the narthex refers to the emperor Andronikos Palaeologos.

The anticlassical style of the 14th century, known from the wall-paintings of the Taxiarch near the Cathedral at Kastoria, is represented in Albania by, *inter alia*, the first phase of decoration of the church of the Virgin on the islet of Mali Grad in Lake Prespa (1344-1345), the wall-paintings in a small church of the Virgin near the village of Cerskë in the area of Leskovik, which have been dated to the end of the 14th century,[3] and the cave churches of the Archangels, the Annunciation and the Virgin on

the south-west shore of Lake Prespa, probably of the 15th century.[4] The second phase of the church of the Virgin at Mali Grad (1368-1369) and the wall-paintings in the church of Christ at Mborja, near Korcë (1390) bear strong iconographic and stylistic similarities with the wall-paintings of the church of Saint Athanasios at Kastoria (1383-1384), whose donors were members of the Albanian Mouzakis family.[5] This painting is inspired by the classicism of the wall-paintings by Georgios Kalliergis in the church of Christ at Veria (1315) and other ensembles, such as the slightly later wall-paintings of Saint Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki. The wall-paintings of Saint Athanasios and of Mborja have been attributed to the same painter, who worked with others at Mali Grad.

Very few icons of the Byzantine period have survived in Albania, and those that are preserved are late in date. The majority of them come from the area of Korcë. The aristocratic Virgin and Child from Blashtojne near Lake Prespa (cat. no. 2), with her sorrowing mien, discreet free lights and the silver background characteristic of icons from west Macedonia, is dated to the 14th century and reflects the Palaeologan art of Constantinople. A completely different ethos is exuded by the large icon of the Virgin *Hodigitria* from Mali Grad in Lake Prespa (cat. no. 5). The background here is ochre and the haloes vivid red. The rough figures represent the anticlassical art of an important workshop centred on Kastoria that flourished in the twenty years from 1485 to 1505 and spread to the west Balkans. At the top right can be seen the prophet Solomon wearing embroidered clothing and holding a scroll with the inscription: *Η Σοφια οἰκοδόμησεν ἑαυτοῦ* (sic) *οἶκον* ('Wisdom has built her house', Prov. 9,1). The Virgin's green kerchief with red fluting and white folds is unusual. The large icon of the archangel Michael, standing, holding the globe of the world and a bared sword has a silver background, which is commonplace in Palaeologan icons from western Macedonia (cat. no. 1). The sparse, broad lights assign the icon to the 14th century.

The sanctuary doors from the cave church at Blashtojne near Lake Prespa, with the usual representation of the Annunciation, was probably made in a Kastoria workshop, since Korcë was an insignificant settlement at this period (cat. no. 3). Here, the background is red and the haloes silver, and the angel stands, though he usually strides vigorously towards the Virgin. The Virgin, holding a spindle, has risen from her seat and bows her head in a token of submission to the divine will. Similarities may be observed with a sanctuary door in the Kastoria Byzantine Museum, which has been dated to the late 15th century.[6] The Annunciation on a small icon from the church of the Annunciation at Berat is completely different: here, the angel runs towards the seated Virgin, while complex architectural structures rise in the background.[7] The icon reflects the Palaeologan art of Constantinople, whereas the sanctuary door is the product of a local workshop.

The icon of Saint Nicholas with twelve scenes from his life (cat. no. 4) may be compared with an icon with the same subject in Kastoria, dating from the early 15th century.[8] The pronounced stylisation of the facial features of the main figure recalls icons from Kastoria, such as that of Saint Athanasios in bust, which is assigned to the late 14th or early 15th century,[9] and the contemporary icon of the same saint from Boboshticë.[10] The inscriptions reveal a limited knowledge of Greek. There is an interesting scene of decapitation at bottom right, in which the executioner seizes the hair of the condemned man, whose arms are immobilised. The small icon of Saint Athanasios of Alexandria (cat. no. 6) from the church of Saint Demetrios at Berat is another product of a local

workshop of the 15th-16th century, in which a good model is followed, though the facial features are stylised in the extreme. The curls of the bushy beard recall a stormy sea, and four locks on the forehead form a cross. The setting of parts of the inscription in circles is a common practice in icons of western Macedonia in the 14th-15th century, an example being the icon of the Virgin from Mali Grad (cat. no. 5).

The 16th century was a period when wall-painting flourished in mainland Greece. The dominant figures were the Cretan Theophanis Strelitzas or Bathas, who worked at Meteora and on Mount Athos, and Frangos Katelanos of Thebes, to whose workshop superb frescoes in churches of Epiros, Thessaly and Macedonia are attributed. The most important painter of the area of what is now central Albania during this century is Onouphrios, priest and *protopapas* of Neokastro, who worked in Kastoria, Valsh, and Shelcan in the area of Elbasan between the years 1547 and 1554, and to whom wall-paintings at Berat and in the area of Prilep in northern Macedonia have been attributed.[11] His figures are lean, standardised, with affected stances, complicated drapery, and stylised wrinkles, and often have a passionate, sugary expression. The gaps around the medallions and the arched panels enclosing the saints are adorned with flowers and imitation marble revetment. Nothing is known of Onouphrios's life, other than that he was *protopapas* at Neokastro (Elbasan), as he himself states in the inscriptions in some churches, but the flawless Greek of his calligraphic inscriptions is an indication of his education, and possibly of his descent. His signature has not been preserved on icons, but many have been attributed to him, such as the finely worked Dodekaorton and the sanctuary doors from Berat, with their brilliant colours, elaborate buildings and picturesque details (cat. nos. 12-15 and 11) or the frowning Saint Demetrios *Myrovletes and Grand Duke* from the church of this saint in Berat (cat. no. 17).

In 1578, Onouphrios's son, Nikolaos, executed the wall-painted decoration of the church of the Virgin Vlacherna at Berat. He also worked on the church of Saint Nicholas at Kurjan, near Fier in central Albania, and the church of Saint George at Arbanasi in Bulgaria, and wall-paintings in the area of Cheimarra have been attributed to him, and he also painted a number of icons, such as the Nativity of Christ at Berat.[12] The wall-paintings in the Vlacherna are influenced by Cretan models, with a drier, distinctly linear treatment.

At the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century, a painter who worked in parts of modern south Albania signs his icons *By the hand of Onouphrios of Cyprus*.[13] Presumably a refugee from Cyprus after the island was captured by the Turks in 1570, this painter came (it is not known how) to the area of Albania. His icons are dated between 1594 and 1615. This Onouphrios presumably studied under local painters, as is clear from the winged John the Baptist of 1599 (cat. no. 21), which is influenced by the art of Onouphrios. A connection with Cypriot painting, in which plaster imitations of metal sheathing are very common, is betrayed by the relief background of this icon, with its cross-shaped flowers in square panels. A different ethos is exuded by the figure of Saint John the Theologian holding an open book, dated to 1596 (cat. no. 20). Here, too, the relief halo imitating an attached metal element, and the chiton with the gold crosses and fleurs-de-lys is probably a recollection of Cypriot painting. The relief background with stylised flowers in square panels, and the chiton adorned with gold flowers are also to be found in the icon of Christ Pantokrator, cat. no. 36.

Very few Cretan icons have been preserved in modern Albania, in contrast with the nearby Ionian islands, Mount Athos, and even Kastoria or Siatista. Amongst them we may note icons of Christ in Glory *(Maiestas Domini)* flanked by the Three Hierarchs and Saint Athanasios, executed in the art of Michael Damaskinos (late 16th century) (cat. no. 8); of the Virgin *Glykophilousa*, dating from the 16th-17th century, with the inscription: *Η ΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΧΑΡΑ* ('the Joy of All') (cat. no. 10); and a two-zone icon measuring 45 x 33 cm. from the Institute of Cultural Monuments at Tiranë, with representations of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple and the Dormition of the Virgin in the upper zone and three saints on horseback in the lower. This icon has wrongly been attributed to the school of Onouphrios: in fact, it strongly recalls the art of Theodoros Poulakis, the painter from Chania who worked in Venice and the Ionian islands and should be dated to the second half of the 17th century.[14]

Knowledge of Cretan painting is revealed by some icons produced by local workshops, such as that of Saint Athanasios from Berat (cat. no. 26). The marble throne, the cushion ending in knots and the dotted halo, which are features of Italian painting of the Trecento, which was adopted by Cretan painting in the early phase of the 15th century, were borrowed probably from Cretan icons rather than Italian paintings.

In the 15th-18th century many painters who were born in Dalmatia or Greece worked in Italy. In contrast, works by artists descended from what is now Albania are rare. A painting from the church of Santa Maria Maggiore at Guglionesi in the district of Molise, now on display in the Museum at L'Aquila, depicts the Virgin enthroned between Saint John the Baptist and the local Saint Adam, who was a monk at Monte Cassino. According to the inscriptions, the painting was executed in 1505 by Michael the Greek from Aulon/Vlorë (*opus Michaelis Greci de Lavelona*). The painting at L'Aquila is influenced by the distinctive art of the Venetian painter Carlo Crivelli (about 1435-1500), who worked mainly in the area of Ancona, and under whom Michael seems to have studied.[15]

Between 1570 and the end of the 17th century family guilds of painters from the village of Linotopi in the foothills of Grammos were active in Epiros, west Macedonia and west central Greece, signing their works with only their Christian names. Their naive art, with its vivid colours and multi-figural scenes painted on a small scale, is influenced by the work of the Theban painter Frangos Katelanos and his fellow-Thebans Frangos and Georgios Kontaris. In Northern Epiros they decorated the narthex of the katholikon of the Monastery of the Prophet Elijah at Yiorgoutsates (1617), the katholikon of the Monastery of the Virgin at Vanista (1617), the church of the Transfiguration at Tsiatista (1626), the church of Saint Nicholas at Sarakinista (1630), the church of the same name at Meliani, Përmet (1632), the katholikon of the Cave Monastery at Sarakinista (1634) and Prophitis Ilias at Stegopolis (1653), while at Lenga in the region of Pogradec they executed the wall-painted decoration of the church of Saint Athanasios,[16] when Arsenios was bishop of Gora and Mokra (1685-1714). The barely legible signature of a painter from Linotopi is preserved on an icon of Christ Pantokrator with the appellation *The Just Judge* from the region of Erseke (cat. no. 29). The date is recorded both from the creation of the world (7199) and: *ἀπὸ τὴν ἔνσαρκον εἰκονομίαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ* ('from the incarnation of Christ') (1691). The gold background imitates a gold metal sheathing with a floral design taken from a luxury textile. There is a similar background for the figure of the winged Baptist crowned by Christ (cat. no. 31), that of Christ Pantokrator dated 1694, accompanied by the signature of the hieromonk Konstantinos (cat. no. 40), the mounted Saint George slaying the dragon (cat. no. 42), and the matching figure of Saint Demetrios mounted on a vivid red horse and thrusting his spear into the tiny figure of Skyloyiannis (cat. no. 43). These last two icons, on which is preserved the signature of Konstantinos the hieromonk, probably to be identified with the previously mentioned painter, come from the church of Saint Nicholas in Moschopolis/Voskopojë. Particular interest attaches to the icon of Saint Demetrios, in which there is a detailed rendering of Thessaloniki, crowned by the *Heptapyrgion*. Cannons project from the walls of the city, and ships sail in the Thermaic gulf. The matching icon of Saint George repeats a type commonly found in Cretan painting, with a boy rescued by the saint seated on the horse's rump, the dragon's tail curled around its leg, the princess fleeing at the bottom left, and her family watching the scene from a tower.

The village of Grammosta in the area of Grammos was the home of Ioannis Skoutaris who in 1657 painted the icon of Christ Pantokrator from Droviani, Dropoli (cat. no. 32), while Michael, who executed the wall-painted decoration of the Monastery of the Dormition at Kamena, Delvinë, came from Zerma in the western foothills of Grammos.[17]

After the Ottoman capture, in 1669, of Crete, the leading artistic centre of the Orthodox East since the 15th century, a number of minor artistic centres of limited importance emerged. One of these was Epiros and western Macedonia (including what is now southern Albania), in which a large number of craftsmen were active, continuing the traditional art and style. The great range of the influence exercised by their art is owed partly to the preference shown for it by the monks of Mount Athos, whose authority was enough to establish church-painters and workshops.

The conditions created by the treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 were more favourable to the Christians, and resulted in the building and decorating of several new churches and monasteries. The increased demand led to an increase in the number of painters, especially in the second half of the 18th century, though the quality of their output declined significantly. At this period a tendency can be detected to embellish scenes with narrative elements and to fragment compositions into several scenes. Baroque, of western and eastern origins, influenced both individual figures and religious scenes to a greater or lesser degree. This influence was channelled partly through engravings, which were distributed to pil-

grims visiting monastic centres and were frequently adorned with elaborate curved frames, flowers and landscapes.

In the early decades of the 18th century there was a learned movement seeking a return to the art of the legendary painter Panselinos of Thessaloniki, who, in the late 13th century, decorated the church of the Protaton, on Mount Athos, an outstanding model for later artists. To this trend, whose theorist was the hieromonk Dionysios of Fournas in Evrytania, belongs a notable painter from Selenitza in the area of Vlorë: David, a hieromonk who decorated the narthex of the chapel of the Virgin Koukouzelissa in the Great Lavra on Mount Athos in 1715 and the large basilica of Saint Nicholas at Voskopojë in 1726, and to whom are attributed the wall-paintings of the Megali Panayia in Thessaloniki (1727) and the exonarthex of the Docheiariou Monastery on Mount Athos.[18] The characteristic features of David's art include the successful rendering of volume, the broad, soft modelling, the bright colour palette, the realistic rendering of contemporary clothing, and lively movements in scenes such as the lauds. Western loans are also to be found in the iconography of the Apocalypse. This is the climate in which the painter of the Incredulity of Thomas (cat. no. 44) moves, with the building in the background adorned with a grisaille masque. Other painters of this period continued to draw inspiration from the work of the Cretans and Onouphrios. One of these was Konstantinos the hieromonk, who in 1710 painted the icon of the Virgin enthroned crowned by two angels and surrounded by prophets within a winding tendril, a reference to the *troparion* 'A rod from the Tree of Jesse' (cat. no. 41). Other works by this painter are preserved at Vithkuq, from where this icon comes, at Voskopojë and Ardenicë.[19]

In the second half of the 18th century, many commissions were placed in the central Balkans with guilds of painters who were not particularly well educated, who came from Macedonia, Epiros and Bulgaria. Their naive painting was a continuation of the traditional style, though it had a more pronounced decorative character, a flat treatment, and strong outlines. Amongst these artists we may single out the brothers Konstantinos and Athanasios of Korcë who took the surname Zographos ('Painter') from their profession. They executed the wall-painted decoration of the churches of Saint Athanasios and the Holy Apostles, and also the portico of the church of Saint Nicholas in Voskopojë (1744, 1752 and 1750), the churches of Saints Kosmas and Damian and the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul at Vithkuq (1750, 1764), the katholikon of Philotheou Monastery (1752 and 1765) and that of Xiropotamou Monastery (1783), the *kyriakon* of the *skete* of Saint Anna (1757) and that of the *skete* of the Xenophontos Monastery (1766), and the church of the Virgin at Kleinovo in Thessaly (1780). On the lintel of the west entrance to the monastery at Ardenicë, north of Vlorë, can be read the inscription: *Διὰ χειρὸς τῶν αὐταδέλφων Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Ἀθανασίου ἐκ πολιτείας Κοριτζᾶς* ('by the hand of the brothers Konstantinos and Athanasios from the town of Koritza'). They also painted a large number of portable icons in Albania (e.g. cat. no. 59) and on Mount Athos.[20] In 1770, Konstantinos signed a Dodekaorton icon in the church of the Zoodochos Pege at Korcë (cat. no. 49). The icons cat. nos. 50 and 51 belong to the same ensemble. Athanasios's son, the priest Efthymios, painted an icon of Saint John the Baptist, now in the National Museum of Medieval Art at Korcë, for the church of the Virgin in the village of Rembec. His cousin Terpos, son of Konstantinos, was more productive and, in the last twenty years of the 18th century and the first two decades of the 19th, painted several icons and executed the wall-painted decoration for five churches, including the katholikon of the famous monastery of Saint Naum on the south shore of Lake Ohrid (1806). In 1782, together with his father, he decorated the church of Saint George in the plain of Mouzakia, near Kolikontasi, where the tomb of Saint Kosmas Aitolos is to be found. In the type of the Virgin and the form of the throne, the icon of the enthroned Virgin holding the Child on her left side (cat. no. 60), a moderate work by Terpos, reveals influences from Cretan art and from the painting of the Ionian islands. We may note the delicate rendering of the eyelids, also to be found in the somewhat earlier icon of Christ Pantokrator (cat. no. 28). In the two-zone icon painted by Terpos in 1800, depicting the Virgin enthroned between angels and with five saints treading on a seven-headed serpent, there are interesting invocations to these saints, beseeching them to protect the household of the donor from the plague and pestilence (cat. no. 61).

One of the most productive Balkan church-painters in the 18th century was Ioannis Tzetiris, who was born about 1720 at Grabovo in Albania: *ἐκ τῆς κομόπολις γρανμπωβας* ('of the township of Grabovo'), according to an icon of Christ dated 1792, which he signs with his brother Georgios (cat. no. 66), or: *ἐκ πολιτείας*

γραμπόβας ('of the city of Grabovo'), as recorded on an icon of Christ Pantokrator, dated 1798, with the apostles set in a winding tendril, which he painted alone (cat. no. 64). The matching Virgin enthroned, combined with the Tree of Jesse (cat. no. 65) does not bear a signature, but is evidently the work of the same artist, painted in the same year. Ioannis Tzetiris belonged to a family of painters that was active mainly in what is now Albania, Hungary and Romania. According to the notes in a manuscript of the *Painter's Manual* which belonged to him and is now in the collection of Greek manuscripts of Mishkolz, Ioannis or Yiankos Tzetiris went to Hungary in 1736 and ten years later to Russia to complete his training as a painter. In 1750-1755 he worked in Romania and then returned to his village and married. This marriage produced six sons, two of whom became painters, and one daughter. In 1772 he painted a templon together with his brother Georgios, and in the years that followed, down to his death (1812), he worked, either alone or with other painters, on churches in Serbia, Hungary and Albania. Ioannis Tzetiris is a typical example of the Orthodox painters who worked in various places during the last two centuries of Ottoman domination in the Balkans. Tzetiris was a polyglot and changed the language of his inscriptions and also the ending of his name according to the region in which he was working. The fact that he used Greek in the notes he wrote in his own hand in his copy of the *Painter's Manual* led Emmanuel Moutafov to the conclusion that he was of Greek descent, but born in Albania. His art belongs to the Balkan *koine* of the period and satisfied his clientele, whether he was working in Albania, Serbia or Romania.[21]

The hierodeacon Konstantinos of Spatheia (Shpatit), who is attested in the fifth decade of the 18th century, came from the area of Berat. Included in the exhibition is a delicately executed icon by this painter of Saint John Vladimir enthroned, holding his head, who was venerated in north-west Macedonia and central Albania (cat. no. 47). The abundant gold striations give the icon a distinctive character. Of the twelve scenes surrounding the central figure, the most interesting is the penultimate scene at the left, with its realistic rendering of the Franks who: *ἔκλεψαν τὸν ἅγιον μὲ τὸ σεντούκι* ('...they stole the saint with the chest') and the two slaughtered beasts of burden.

Many of the icons on display are of interest for the donor's inscriptions of various guilds, such as those in the icons of All Saints, dated 1762 (cat. no. 48) and of the First Ecumenical Council, dated 1765 (cat. no. 53).

Many late icons preserve iconographic elements drawn from the Byzantine tradition, such as the Baptism (cat. no. 45), in which serpents emerge from the stone on which Christ stands, while the scene is watched by the personification of the river Jordan, in the form of a bearded man holding a vase. The rod and the fur lining of the cloak of the enthroned Saint George (cat. no. 27) is a memory of the late 15th-century workshop at Kastoria. In other cases, the iconography differs from the established version, as in the icon of the First Ecumenical Council (cat. no. 53). The majority of the late icons follow the baroque style, as in the Dodekaorton icons cat. nos. 54 and 56, and the despotic icon of Christ dated 1830 from the church of the Annunciation at Tiranë, painted by Michael and his son Dimitrios (cat. no. 68), who may be identified with the painters from Samarina mentioned by Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou.[22] The reference to the gospel passage in the open book is an unusual feature. Some icons are obviously influenced by contemporary engravings, such as the Virgin, the Unfading Rose, surrounded by the Holy Trinity and saints (cat. no. 52).

On the sanctuary door from Boboshticë, probably dating from the 18th century, with its relief floral decoration, there is an interesting depiction of Saint Spyridon with the Three Hierarchs (cat. no. 46). The veneration of the saint spread from Corfu not only to the coast of northern Epiros, but also to the region of Korcë.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the church-painters who worked on Mount Athos were influenced by Russian icons of this period. An icon of Saints Kosmas and Damian by the brothers George the monk and Ioannis Dimitriou from Rehovë near Erseke, dated 26 June 1899, is painted on a gold background with incised linear decoration imitating a metal sheathing (cat. no. 72). At the feet of the healing saints is a detailed depiction of a village, probably the native village of the painters, in which can be seen the School, the Church and the 'House of Tsilio' (a diminutive of the name Vasiliki or Anastasia). The lettering of the inscription imitates typographic fonts. After cleaning, a folk painting of Mount Athos at the same period was uncovered on the back.

This remarkable material, which was conserved and is dis-

played at the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, gives a fairly comprehensive picture of the art of the portable icon in south Albania from the 14th to the end of the 19th century.

The conclusions arising from this brief examination of painting in Albania from the 9th to the 18th century attempted above may be summarised as follows:

1. The most notable frescoes in Albania are either the work of painters who had been invited from the major centres -Constantinople and Thessaloniki- (such as the Palaeologan wall-paintings in the monastery of Apollonia), or the product of local workshops in west Macedonia (like the decoration of the church of the Virgin at Mali Grad and that of Christ at Mborja).
2. Very few Byzantine portable icons have survived in Albania. Products of the local workshop in the area of Kastoria-Ohrid form the largest group.
3. In the 16th century a local workshop developed in central Albania, the main representative of which was Onouphrios, the Greek-speaking *protopapas* of Neokastro. His works -wall-paintings and icons- are influenced by the Cretan School, but are characterised by a distinctly decorative trend, standardised faces and mannerist postures.
4. In the 17th and 18th century, the output of wall-paintings and icons increased in quantitative terms, but the quality declined. Painters from what is now south Albania expressed themselves in the idiom common to the Balkans. Outstanding amongst them was David of Selenitza, near Vlorë, the supreme representative of the movement seeking to revive Palaeologan style at the beginning of the 18th century. In the 18th and 19th century, painters from Albania decorated many churches in the Balkans and on Mount Athos.
5. All the inscriptions on icons and wall-paintings down to the beginning of the 20th century are written in Greek, apart from a very few icons that have Slavonic inscriptions.
6. In comparison with other areas, few Cretan icons with fine-quality art have been preserved in Albania. By contrast, many craftsmen worked there from west Macedonia (Linotopi, Gramosta and Samarina) and from central Epiros (e.g. from Kapesovo).
7. Painters from Albania did not distinguish themselves in western Europe in the same way as several artists from Dalmatia and Greece.

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NOTES

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7. *Percorsi del Sacro*, no. 5.

8. N. ZIAS, Εἰκόνες τοῦ βίου καὶ τῆς Κοιμήσεως τοῦ ἁγίου Νικολάου, *ΔΧΑΕ*, 4th period, 5, 1966-1969, pp. 275-290, with a list of similar icons on p. 276 note 10.

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THE STUDY OF THE ICONS FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MEDIEVAL ART, KORCË

PREFACE

Aesthetic and religious ekphrasis, the reconstruction of history, the travels of painters and cultural influences: these were the objectives involved in the study of a sorely-tested body of material -the icons of the Orthodox communities of Albania- in the conservation laboratories of the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki.

This research challenge was inherent in the invitation from the director of the Museum, Dr. Anastasia Tourta, to write the academic catalogue of the exhibition of a selection of icons from the Museum of National and Medieval Art at Korcë.

When I first saw the icons in the storerooms and laboratories of the Thessaloniki Museum at the beginning of 2004, they bore the burden of their vicissitudes in time, place and history. Most of them were submitting to scientific investigation for the first time. In their painting could be traced the currents of the art of Orthodox Christians from the time of the Palaeologoi until the early decades of the 19th century, and their donors expressed the measure of their piety and their desire to perpetuate their memory through barely legible inscriptions. The fruit of rich artistic activity was about to take its place in the cultural environment of the communities of central and southern Albania.

The wealth of portable icons from Albania, once an inseparable part of the churches and now assembled mainly in the museums of Berat and Korcë, was revealed to the wider academic community for the first time in 1993, with an exhibition in Nice, France. This was followed by exhibitions in Munich, in 2001, and another the following year in Vicenza, Italy. These early presentations were impressive and revealed the wealth and quality of the paintings, despite the fact that they were not accompanied by the in-depth accounts of the art of the painters or the detailed analyses of the inscriptions to which the icons lent themselves.

An initial approach to the seventy-two pieces -fifty-six of which are published for the first time- led gradually to their division into sub-groups, a rationale that has also been followed by the display in the Museum of Byzantine Culture. We knew that the north-east side of Albania and the art of its churches were defined by its proximity to Ohrid and the area of its Archdiocese. The presence of outstanding icons of 16th-century Cretan art was very revealing. It confirmed the prestige of the painting cultivated in Crete after the fall of Constantinople, and also demonstrated that the ecclesiastical and lay officials of Sarandë and Berat were conversant with the important artistic movements of their time. The Adriatic and Ionian seas facilitated contacts between the western regions (Sarandë, Vlorë, Fier, Ardenicë, and as far as Durrës) and Italy, the Ionian islands, and by extension with Crete and Cyprus. The learned protopapas of Neokastro, Onouphrios, who had come from the "brilliant" city of the Venetians, and his colleagues, such as Onouphrios of Cyprus, worked in the churches of Berat in the middle of the 16th and early 17th century, creating new, remarkable paintings that reveal familiarity with the trends of western art, the Byzantine manuscript tradition, and Palaeologan iconography.

What is known to date of the development of painting from the end of the 17th to the 18th century, a period in which the political and economic circumstances of the Ottoman empire were favourable, finds confirmation in a large number of new, mainly signed, works. Painters of Greek education and culture, and speaking the Greek language, were active in areas of Macedonia and Epiros, mainly as a result of the prestige brought by their recognition by Mount Athos. They also penetrated the entire Balkans, where the Orthodox peoples shared the same religious beliefs and the same Byzantine artistic tradition.

The presence of learned painters in Albania during the 18th

century is linked with the prelacy of the Archbishop of Ohrid, Ioasaph of Voskopojë, who was ambitious of restoring the former prestige of the Archdiocese, and whose achievements in the spiritual sphere were beneficial to classically-oriented education and culture. The communication routes between the Prespa Lakes, Korcë and Voskopojë facilitated the movement of teams of painters. Monastic centres at Ardenicë and Elbasan, under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Ohrid, attracted and supported the work of Orthodox painters, which is imprinted on the icons in the collection of the Korcë Museum.

One group of particular importance consists of the unpublished icons by the painters Konstantinos and Athanasios of Korcë, who were members of a famous, highly productive family painting workshop that was active from the middle of the 18th to the early decades of the 19th century. The icons from the Korcë Museum enabled us to distinguish their art, which falls within the charming atmosphere of baroque. A tendency to be faithful to the Byzantine tradition was detected in the works of the elder brother, Konstantinos, with a more western style in those of the younger Athanasios. At the same time, the Greek votive inscriptions revealed the intense activity and wealth of the guilds that flourished at Vithkuk, Korcë and Voskopojë.

The range and splendour of the icons from the Korcë Museum, with their inscriptions, express the tendency of the entire Greek world, especially 'the most noble lords, most helpful dealers and the mastercraftsmen of the blessed guilds', to give the interior of churches an atmosphere of prosperity and social progress similar to that predominant in the *archontika* ('mansions') of the 18th century.

The group of icons studied revealed that the aesthetic preferences of the Orthodox peoples remained true to the art of Byzantium over the centuries, though also that the painters and pious donors proved capable of adapting to the demands and changes of the times.

I would like to express my warm thanks to Anastasia Tourta, director of the Museum of Byzantine Culture of Thessaloniki, for her confidence, her close collaboration, and her willingness to put at my disposal the valuable knowledge of Albania she has acquired from a series of academic missions to that country.

I am grateful to my colleague, Stamatis Chondroyiannis, archaeologist at the Museum of Byzantine Culture, for the kind reception invariably extended to me in Thessaloniki and the Museum rooms, and for his support and collaboration.

My thanks, too, to the photographer Stamatis Zoubourtikoudis, whose youthful enthusiasm was equal to the many hours of photography required for the study, and to all the personnel of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, particularly the conservators, for their unfailing and ready collaboration.

The felicitous comments of Vasilis Panayiotopoulos, former director of the Institute of Neohellenic Research, shed light on my investigation of historical questions. Marina Loukaki, assistant professor at the University of Crete, gave her constant support in the solution of philological problems. Angeliki Stavropoulou, deputy professor of archaeology at the University of Ioannina, offered her generous and constant academic and moral support.

The excellent quality of the book owes much to its editor, the archaeologist Jenny Albani, who was always ready and willing to resolve problems.

I was supported in the study by the patience of my family and the encouragement of friends.

I would like to thank all of them for their assistance in my efforts to add a piece to the mosaic of painting after the fall of Constantinople and to an understanding and projection of the work of its painters.

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CATOLOGUE

TEXTS: EUGENIA DRAKOPOULOU

1. The Archangel Michael

177.5 x 76.5 x 4.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 2278 (KO 2278)
Provenance: Region of Korcë
Date: 14th century

The large, imposing icon of the winged archangel, wearing military uniform and with his sword raised, alludes to the archangel as guardian of Byzantine churches, who is depicted near the sanctuary or at the entrance.

This icon, executed in art of outstanding quality, has unfortunately suffered significant damage at the edges, and even more at the bottom. On the silver background characteristic of icons from Macedonia[1] can be seen the thin line that formed the halo, and traces of part of the inscription associated with the archangel at the top left. At the top right, in red lettering, is the inscription *MHX(A)IΛ* ('Michael').

The iconographic schema of the full-length frontal military saint belongs to the art of the Palaeologan period.[2] The archangel in the present icon, with his sword in his right hand, held in his left a globe, of which a small part can be seen. The globe, symbol of authority, is a basic element in the iconography of the archangels, but the depiction of the archangel with the globe and military uniform, as in an icon on Mount Sinai,[3] is quite rare. The archangel Michael is rendered in the same way, as guardian, next to the entrance of the church of Saint Athanasios Mouzaki (1383/84) in Kastoria.[4] The decoration of the metal cuirass, embellished with gold, worn by the archangel from the Korcë area is very carefully executed and recalls the corresponding decoration of an icon of Saint George from Struga near Ohrid, dating from 1266/67.[5]



The robust body of the angel is complemented by the spirituality of the youthful face with its noble, distant expression. The face is rendered with brown outlines and a light brown preparation, the flesh modelled by a series of delicate brushstrokes, with white highlights lighting up the projecting parts of it.

The high quality of the painting, the nature of the modelling, with white highlights, the red line following the shape of the nose, the character in the face, and the silver ground, all link this work with two icons from the church of Saint Clement of Ohrid, now in the National Gallery of the town and dating from the middle of the 14th century.[6]

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1. See cat. no. 2.
2. As in the chapel in the Chora Monastery (Underwood 1966, 3, fig. 250-251, 253-256).
3. See Weitzmann 1982, 194, fig. 18.
4. Chatizdakis 1984, 114, fig. 8.
5. See Vocotopoulos 1995, no. 63.
6. *Trésors médiévaux de la République de Macédoine* 1999, nos. 31, 32, with earlier bibliography.



2. Virgin and Child

87.5 x 60 x 5 cm.
Inv. no. KO 347
Provenance: Cave church of the Virgin, Blashtojne, Lake Prespa
Date: 14th century

The figure of the Virgin, holding the Child on her left side, in a variation of the type of the *Hodigitria*, is an outstanding work of Palaeologan art, exuding nobility and restrained sorrow. It comes from the cave church at Blashtojne, Lake Prespa, from the same church (dedicated to the Virgin in the 14th century), as the sanctuary door (cat. no. 3).

The icon has several damaged areas, mainly on the silver ground, which was a common substitute for gold in works from western Macedonia.[1] The haloes are formed by a thin double line. The frame of the icon is adorned by a vermilion band. The soft, painterly modelling of the faces and arms, the use of light ochre for the flesh, which imperceptibly turns pink in the cheeks, and the free white highlights on the projecting parts, point to the Palaeologan origins of the icon. In the finely drawn face of the Virgin, with its arched eyebrows, a thin brown-red line follows the outline of the long, straight nose, and the eyelids are emphasised by a similar line. The well-formed upper lip is more pronounced than the lower. All the facial features are superbly drawn and painted and lend the mother's face a distant expression that stems from knowledge of the impending Passion. Christ, with his high forehead, in a stance balancing that of his mother, rests his feet on her right arm and thrusts the bare sole of his foot forward, in a reference to his future suffering.[2] He blesses and holds a closed scroll in his other hand.

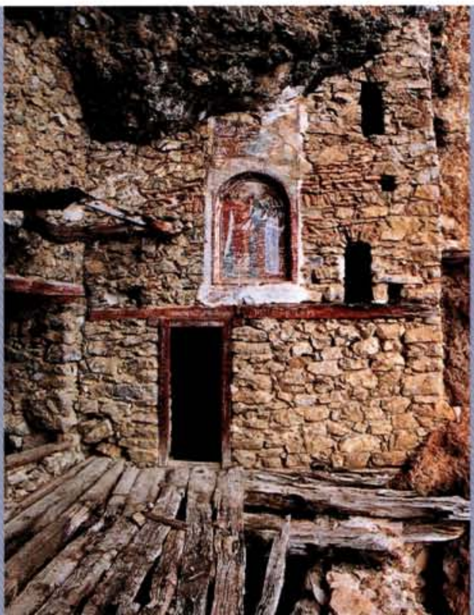
The Virgin's deep purple, almost violet, *maphorion*, which had silver decoration, is fastened high on her neck. The same dark blue used for Christ's chiton can be seen at the edge of her head-cover and the sleeve of her garment. Christ's *himation* leaves his chiton exposed down to the thighs, a feature that recalls the type of Christ in Palaeologan icons, such as the Virgin Eleousa in the Chilandari Monastery and the Virgin Peribleptos in Moscow, which reproduce the type of a miraculous Constantinopolitan icon.[3]

The area of Lake Prespa, which is closely associated with Ohrid, the ecclesiastical centre of the region, was in contact with 14th-century artistic workshops, which produced this piece, with its fine-quality painting.

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1. See Vocotopoulos 1995, nos. 75-76.
2. See Baltoyianni 1994, 131-134.
3. See Chatzidaki 1997, 68, with bibliography.

1


2


1. View of the cave church of the Virgin at Blashtojne, Lake Prespa.

2. The entrance to the cave church.



3. Sanctuary door with the Annunciation

118.2 x 39.4 x 4 cm (left leaf)
118.5 x 32 x 3 cm. (right leaf)
Inv. no. KO 2281, 2282
Provenance: Cave church of the Virgin, Blashtojne, Lake Prespa
Date: 15th century

The two leaves of the sanctuary door with the Annunciation form a spare, uncluttered composition, confined to two figures, and with no reference to the setting. The representation is completely static, and movement is absent even from the messenger Gabriel, who usually walks towards the Virgin. This static quality automatically compels the spectator's eye to identify the only movement in the icon in the notional triangle formed by the ray of the Holy Spirit, the arm of the angel, blessing, and the arm of the Virgin accepting the news.

The following inscriptions are painted in ochre on the red ground: *Ο ΑΡΧ(ΑΓΓΕΛΟϹ) ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ*, *ΜΗ(ΤΗ)Ρ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ* and *Ο ΕΥΒΑΓΓΕΛΗϹΜΟϹ* ('The Archangel Gabriel', 'Mother of God' and 'The Annunciation').

A ray of heavenly light, containing the Holy Spirit in the form of a small dove, issues from the semi-dome of the sky and falls on the Virgin's halo.

The angel, wearing imperial raiment with a pearl-studded *loros* crossed on his breast, holds the herald's staff.

The Virgin, wearing a deep purple *maphorion* fastened high on her neck, and a grey-blue dress, has just stood up from the red stool on which she was spinning, and, still holding the spindle, raises her right hand, with the palm open, in a gesture of amazement, which is at the same time a gesture introducing the mystery of the Incarnation. The inclination of her head, the gesture, which is addressed to the spectator, and the slightly raised shoulder indicate submission to the will of God.

The icon is damaged in several places, particularly at the bottom, where the painting is completely destroyed.

The decorative elements at the top of the sanctuary doors are the same as those of the sanctuary doors from the church of Saints Constantine and Helen at Ohrid, now in the Museum of the town, which date from about 1400.[1] Silver was commonly used instead of gold on the halo in works produced in western Macedonia at the time of the Palaeologoi.[2] The above features and the almost classical austerity of the painting recall earlier representations of the 15th century. And the dress and posture of the angel are reminiscent of the archangel of the Annunciation from the Peribleptos at Ohrid (about 1365),[3] while the position of the Virgin's arm, emerging from beneath her *maphorion*, recalls the Virgin in the Annunciation from Bolnica (1386).[4]

A later date is dictated mainly by the modelling of the faces in the picture. The transition to the lighter parts of the face is abrupt, the outlines are strongly delineated, and the white highlights reveal a certain clumsiness. The manner of execution links the sanctuary door from Prespa with the sanctuary door with the Annunciation in the Byzantine Museum at Kastoria, which has been associated with wall-paintings executed by the Kastoria workshop[5] in the church of Saint Spyridon in this town, dating from the end of the 15th century.[6] Also, the posture of the Virgin and the way in which the Holy Spirit descends recalls the depiction of the Annunciation in the church of the nun Eupraxia at Kastoria,[7] dating from 1485/86.

The sanctuary door for the church at Prespa was apparently executed by notable painters from Kastoria during the 15th century, and contains memories of earlier painted works from nearby Ohrid.

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2. See cat. nos 1, 2.
3. Grozdanov 1980, fig. 101.
4. Grozdanov 1980, fig. 122.
5. See cat. no. 5.
6. Tsigaridas 1995, 351-352, figs. 5, 14 15.
7. Tsigaridas 1992, fig. 30.



The templon in the cave church of the Virgin at Blashtojne, Lake Prespa.


ΜΡ ΘΥ



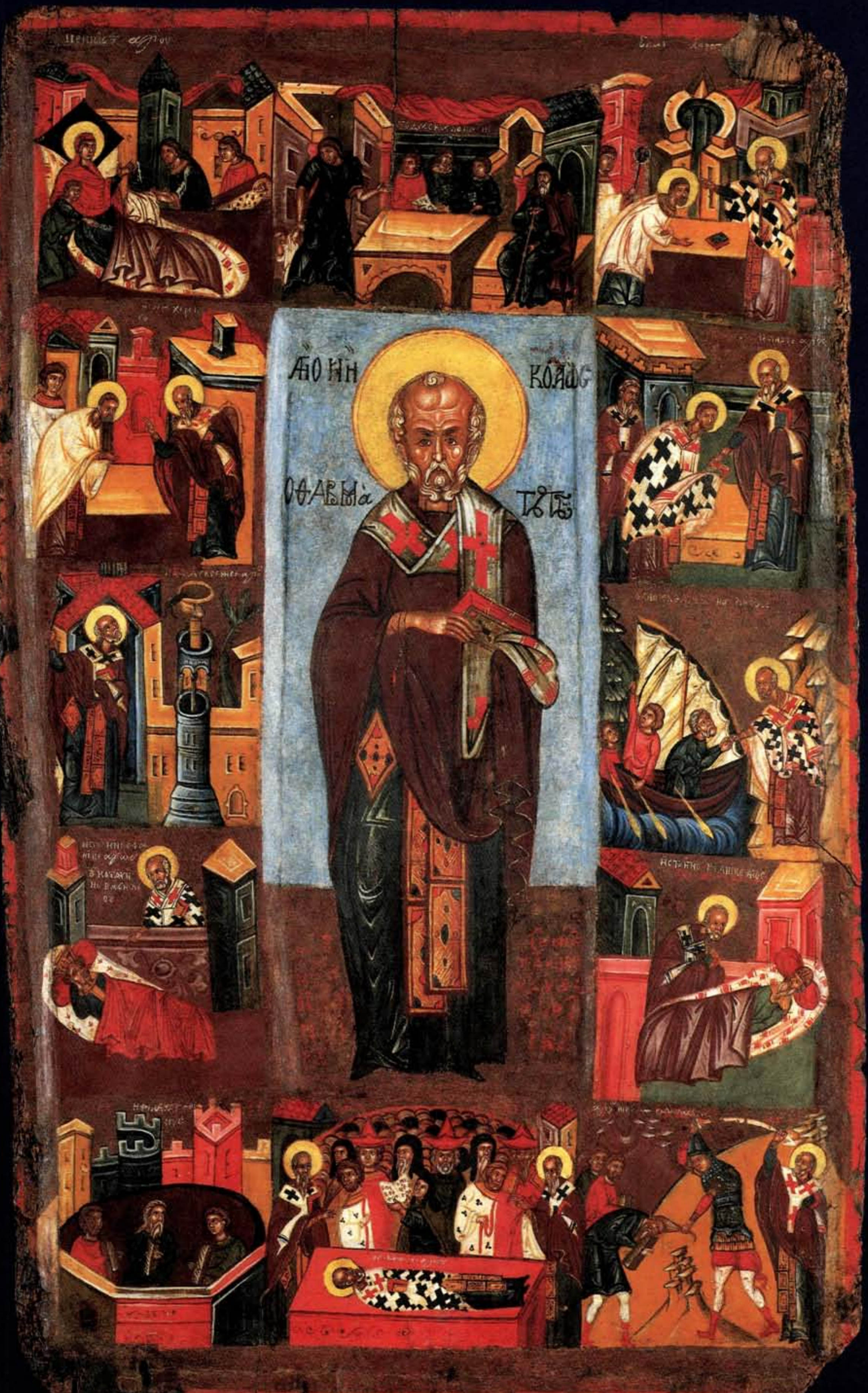
Cross with cryptograms, on the back of the icon.

4. Double-sided icon

First side: Saint Nicholas and scenes from his life
Second side: Cross
90.8 x 55.4 x 8 cm.
Inv. no. IN 5027
Provenance: Tiranë
Date: 15th century

The wood at the edges of the icon is damaged. At the centre, Saint Nicholas, one of the most popular saints of the Orthodox world, is depicted full-length, with twelve scenes of his life and miracles around him.
The representation is dominated by warm tones of ochre, brown and red. On the light blue ground of the central scene, the incorrectly spelled inscription *ΑΓΗΟ ΝΗΚΟΛΑΩC Ο ΘΑΒΜΑΤΟΥΡΓΟC* ('Saint Nicholas the Miracle-worker') appears to have replaced an original inscription. All the inscriptions accompanying the individual scenes of the icon are also re-written in white lettering over the original red. The formulation of the Greek and the letter forms make it clear that the writer of this second layer of inscriptions did not know Greek very well. This, not recent, intervention did not extend to the votive inscription, which can be seen, quite damaged, at the bottom of the central scene.
In the two zones at the top are depicted five scenes from the saint's life,[1] from left to right, his birth (*ΗΕΝΙCΙC ΤΟΥ ἁγίου*), his school education and his election as deacon, priest and bishop. The scene of the saint being taken to school, with the accompanying inscription *CΤΟ ΔΑCΚΑ-ΛΟ παη αγιος* ('the saint goes to the teacher') is not often found in later icons.[2] At the edge of the scene, the young, frightened, reluctant saint hides behind his mother, who pulls him by the hand. In the centre, in front of a large table, sit three serious pupils with their writing tablets, and at the right edge is the aged teacher.
This relatively rare rendering of the scene of the saint being taken to school is found in representations of the Palaeologan period.[3]

In the next six panels are depicted six scenes of miracles, with the Dormition of the saint at the bottom centre, accompanied by the inscription *απεθανε αγιος* ('the saint has died').
Of the miracles, the scene third from the top on the left side depicts the destruction of the idols, which is accompanied by the inscription *ΗΔΟΛΑ ΕΚΡΕΜΗCΕ αγιος* ('the saint cast down the idols'). In the corresponding panel on the right side is a representation of one of the saint's miracles connected with the sea, the scene of the rescue of sailors from the storm, which has the inscription: *Ο ΑΓΗΟ ΕΚ ΘΑΛΑCCΗC ΓΛΗΤΟCΕ* ('the saint escapes the sea').
Four scenes, depicted in pairs to the right and left at the bottom of the icon, relate to the miracle of the rescuing of the three generals from Myra, who were slandered, unjustly condemned of treason, taken to the executioner to be put to death, but saved thanks to the saint's supernatural intervention. Indifference to the correct chronological order of the scenes is common in icons of Saint Nicholas in the Byzantine period and later.[4] According to the historical narrative, the correct order for the story of the three generals unjustly condemned by the emperor and the eparch would have been: rescue from the executioner, the depiction of them in prison, the saint's appearance to the emperor Constantine in a dream, and then in a dream of the eparch. In the present icon, the appearance of the saint in a dream to the emperor Constantine is depicted at the top left, with the inscription: *ΗC ΤΩ ΗΠΝΟ ΕΦΑ/ΝΙΚΕ αγιως / ΤΟΥ ΚΟCΤΑΝΤΗΝΟΥ ΒΑCΗΛΕΟC* ('the saint appeared in the sleep of the emperor



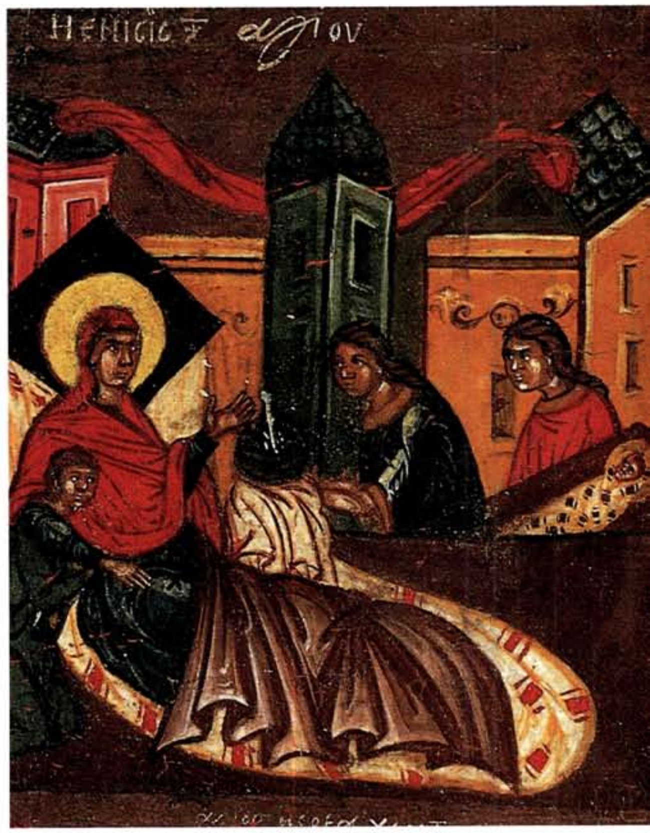
Constantine'), with the three generals in prison at the bottom. At top right is the saint's appearance in a dream to the eparch: *ΗC ΤΟ ΗΠΝΟ ΕΦΑΝΗΚΕ ΑΓΗΟC* ('the saint appeared in sleep'), just after his appearance to Constantine, with the rescue of the three innocents from the executioner at the bottom. An impressive element of the last scene, rendered with great realism, is the violent movement of the executioner, who drags his victim by the hair, with his arms immobilised, and prepares to bring down his raised sword. This detail is rare in the iconography of beheadings,[5] though it is found in monuments of this period and region, as in the exterior wall of the church of the Virgin Koumbelidiki at Kastoria.[6]

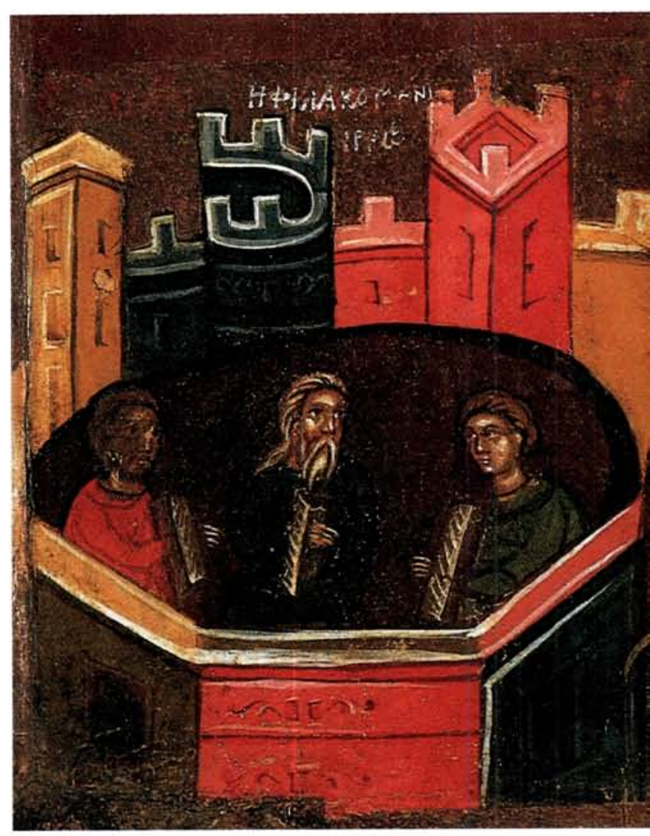
In the central representation, the saint is shown full-length and frontally, wearing prelate's vestments –a dark red *phelonion* and a white *omophorion* with red crosses, an *epitrachelion* and an *epigonation*– and holding a closed, decorated gospel book.

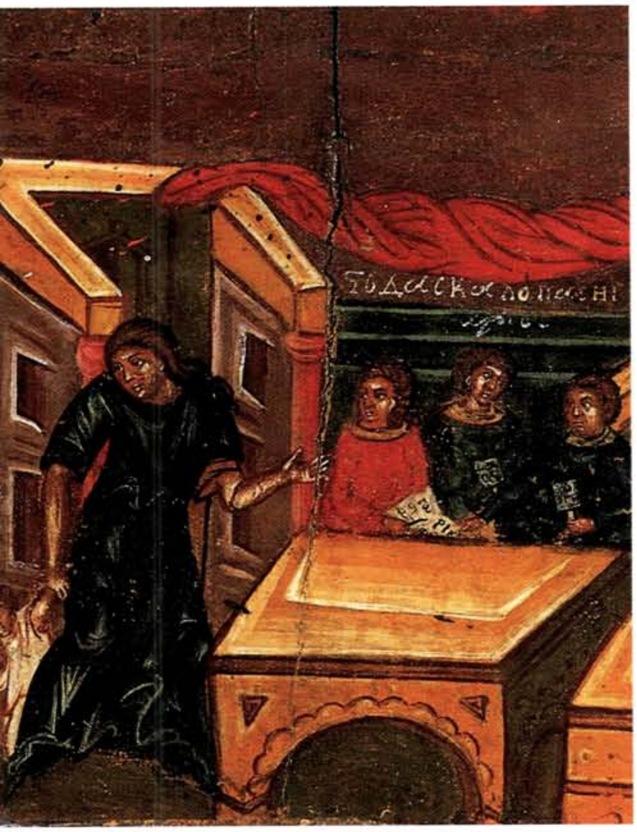
At the saint's feet, is a majuscule votive inscription, the left part of which is quite badly damaged: *[ΔΕΗCΙC] ΤΟΥ / ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ / Θ(ΕΟ)Υ ΑΠ/[ΟCΤΟ/ Λ]ΟΥ* ('supplication of the servant of God Apostolos'); the better preserved right part reads: *ΥΟΥ ΝΗΚ[ΟΛΑΟΥ] / Κ(ΑΙ) ΤΟΥ ΑΔΕΛ/ΦΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΚΟ[ΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝ]ΟΥ / Κ(ΑΙ) Α[ΝΔΡ[ΟΝ]/ΙΚΟΥ* ('son of Nikolaos and his brother Konstantinos and Andronikos').

On the back of the icon is depicted a foliate apotropaic and amuletic cross with the cryptograms: *Ε(ΛΕΝΗ) Ε(ΥΡΕ) Ε(ΛΕΟΥC) Ε(ΥΡΗΜΑ), Χ(ΡΙCΤΟC) Χ(ΡΙCΤΙΑΝΟΙC) Χ(ΑΡΙΝ) Χ(ΑΡΙΖΕΤΑΙ), Α(ΡΧΗ) Π(ΙCΤΕΩC) Μ(ΥCΤΗΡΙΟΥ) C(ΤΑΥΡΟC)* ('Helen found a support of mercy', 'Christ giveth blessing to the Christians', 'the cross is the beginning of the mystery of faith'). The cross, which is contemporary with the icon and which, in the case of a despotic icon would be visible from the sanctuary,[7] has a decorative design involving blossoming branches springing from the holy wood. The rendering is less elaborate than that of similar crosses, such as that in the church of Saint Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki,[8] or in an icon of Christ in the Byzantine Museum in Athens,[9] and closer to the design of an icon of the Virgin *Glykophilousa* from the same Museum, dating from the second half of the 14th century.[10] Crosses executed in similar art, and the cryptograms in the icon of Saint Nicholas from the Korcë Museum are also to be found in works in the same geographical area and from the same period: the icon of Saint Nicholas from Ohrid, of the second half of the 15th century,[11] and wall-paintings at the entrance of the churches of Saints Constantine and Helen at Ohrid (1460)[12] and of the Virgin *Eleousa* at Lake Prespa (1410).[13]

The manner of execution of the entire icon, especially the rendering of the figure of the saint, with the use of line to define the individual volumes of the face and the broad highlights, the stylisation of the features, the strong expressivity, and the decorative character of the treatment of the hair and beard, all link this work with the art of the painting workshop that was active at the end of the 15th century in Kastoria,[14] and also with a series of portable icons of the same period and region. The figure of the saint recalls Saint Nicholas the *Ardent Guardian* on the north wall of the esonarthex of the church of the Virgin Koumbelidiki at Kastoria,[15] a wall-painting of the workshop, and also a portable icon depicting the saint and scenes from his life, from the church of Saint Nicholas Magaleiou in the same town, dating from the 15th century.[16] Moreover, the facial features of the figures in two icons of Saint Athanasios, from Kastoria[17] and Boboshticë, now in the Korcë Museum,[18] and an icon of Saint Nicholas from the church of Saint Dimitrios at Ohrid,[19] all dating from the 15th century, exhibit a close stylistic affinity with the present icon.







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Trésors d'art albanais 1993, no. 34.

1. For the life of Saint Nicholas see Anrich 1917 and for his iconographic cycles in Byzantine art see Patterson - Ševčenko 1983.
2. See Chatzidaki 2001, 405.
3. Patterson - Ševčenko 1983, 73.
4. See Chatzidakis 1977, 51. Vasilaki 1994, 231, note 6.
5. See Katsioti 1998, 145.
6. Chatzidakis 1982, fig. 199.
7. Acheimastou-Potamianou 1998, 56.
8. Xyngopoulos 1964, figs. 152-153.
9. Acheimastou-Potamianou 1998, no. 14.
10. Acheimastou-Potamianou 1998, no. 17.
11. Popovska-Korobar 2004, no. 13.
12. Subotić 1971, 53.
13. Moutsopoulos 1989, 147.
14. See cat. no. 5.
15. Drakopoulou 1997, 119, fig. 108.
16. Zias 1969. Chatzidakis 1966-1969. *Holy Image, Holy Space* 1988, no. 38.
17. Tsigaridas 1995, 348, fig. 3.
18. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 2.
19. Popovska-Korobar 2004, no. 13.



5. The Virgin Hodigitria

90.4 x 68 x 5 cm.
Inv. no. KO 2228
Provenance: Church of the Nativity of the Virgin, Mali Grad, Lake Prespa
Date: Late 15th century

The iconographic type of the icon reproduces the well-known type of the *Hodigitria*, the palladium-icon of Constantinople, showing the Virgin in bust, with Christ Emmanuel on her left arm and her right arm in front of her breast.[1]

The icon has a few small areas of damage and a vertical crack on the right side. It comes from the islet of Mali Grad in what is now the Albanian part of Lake Prespa, which in the 15th century fell under the jurisdiction of the archdiocese of Ohrid. During the 14th century, in 1369, the church of the Nativity, from which this icon comes, was given wall-painted decoration by a painting workshop whose activity has been detected a few years later in the town of Kastoria (Saint Athanasios Mouzaki, 1383/4) and the area of Korcë (Borje, 1390).[2]

A century later, a notable painter's workshop, whose art can be traced in monuments throughout the Balkans,[3] was active on the fringes of the archdiocese of Ohrid, centred on Kastoria. The survival of the anti-classical trend of 14th-century Palaeologan painting, with a tendency towards a more popular art, in the output of this workshop, along with characteristically expressive facial features, verging on physical ugliness,[4] are hallmarks that can immediately be detected in the sturdy, well-built figures in the icon from Mali Grad.

The upper part, with its ochre background, is dominated by the vivid red haloes, as on the sanctuary door with the Annunciation in the Kastoria Byzantine Museum, which has been attributed to the same workshop.[5] Christ's cruciate halo, with the inscription *Ο ΩΝ* ('the Being'), is the same as Christ's halo in a 15th-century icon of the *Akra Tapeinosis* in the Byzantine Museum of Kastoria.[6]

The square, robust face of the Virgin recalls the faces of the military saints in the wall-painted decoration of the Old Katholikon in the Metamorphosis Monastery at Meteora (1483).[7] Her head-cover is adorned with broad red stripes, as in an icon of Saint Paraskevi dating from the middle of the 15th century and now in the Byzantine Museum of Veria.[8] The lively figure of the frontal, frowning Christ is rendered with light-coloured garments, a white *chiton* enlivened by small red and black designs, and a bright red *himation* that hangs sumptuously down to the soles of his feet. The rather flaccid modelling and broad highlights of the faces have distinct, stylised shadows that give the figures an expressionist character.

Solomon emerges from the stylised sky in a manner commonly found in paintings by this workshop, recalling similar representations in the Old Katholikon at Meteora (1483)[9] and Saint Nicholas Magaleiou at Kastoria (1504/5).[10]

The decoration of the pearl-studded crown worn by the prophet-king and his royal raiment call to mind the corresponding decoration of clothing in wall-paintings from the Old Katholikon at Meteora (1483)[11] and the church of Saint Nicholas of the nun Eupraxia at Kastoria (1485/6).[12]

The inscriptions *Μ(ΗΤΗ)Ρ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ [Η Ο]ΔΗΓΗΤΡΙΑ* and *Ι(ΗCΟΥ)C Χ(ΡΙCΤΟ)C Ο ΕΜΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ* ('Mother of God Hodigitria' and 'Jesus Christ Emmanuel') are painted in sections at various points of the icon. The enclosing of sections of inscriptions in circles is a common practice in paintings by this workshop. Solomon, accompanied by the

1. The islet of Mali Grad.

2. The church of the Nativity of the Virgin at Mali Grad.

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inscription (of red letters) *ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗC COΛΟΜΟΝ* ('the prophet Solomon'), holds a large unrolled scroll revealing the inscription *Η CΩΦΗΑ ΟΚΟ-ΔΟΜΗCEN EAYTOY HKON* ('Wisdom hath builded her house') (Proverbs 9, 1), executed in large calligraphic lettering. It should be noted that the lettering of the inscriptions on this icon recalls the script of the painters of the Kastoria workshop, both in the specific letter forms, such as the delta, and in the way in which abbreviations and contractions are formed.[13]

The output of this workshop, which executed wall-paintings and portable icons of a very high artistic quality, renewing the artistic tradition of Macedonia, covers the period from 1483 to 1510, to which the creation of the icon from the Lake Prespa church should be assigned.

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1. See *Μήτηρ Θεού* 2000, 144.
2. Djurić 1975.
3. Of the extensive bibliography see Chatzidakis 1966-1969. Tsigaridas 1992, 165ff, note 7. Drakopoulou 1997, 117-122.
4. Chatzidakis 1982, 415.
5. Tsigaridas 1995, fig. 5.
6. Kakavas 1996, fig. p. 24.
7. Chatzidakis and Sophianos 1990, 91.
8. Papazotos 1995, no. 99.
9. Chatzidakis and Sophianos 1990, 89.
10. Drakopoulou 1997, fig. 86.
11. Chatzidakis and Sophianos 1990, 89-91.
12. Pelekanidis 1953, pl. 186.
13. For the letter forms in the painting of the workshop see Drakopoulou 1997, 141, figs. 117, 118 and pl. pp. 145-149.

6. Saint Athanasios of Alexandria

32.5 x 25 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3649
Provenance: Church of Saint Demetrios, Berat
Date: About 1500

This small icon, the wood of which is damaged, especially on the edges, has a depiction of Saint Athanasios in bust, against a gold ground. He wears a dark brown *phelonion* and a light-coloured *omophorion*, holds a gospel book in his left hand, and raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing. The Alexandrian saint lived in the 4th century and came to the throne of Alexandria (328) after his dynamic contribution as deacon to the First Ecumenical Council at Nikaia. The saint, who was highly active within the church and also as a writer,[1] was widely venerated in Macedonia and Epiros, as is evident from the large number of surviving portable icons of him.

In this icon he is depicted in the usual iconographic type as an old man, with a wide face and large, square, white beard with stylised curls. Broad white brushstrokes against the dark preparation can be seen in his face and hands, indicating a certain boldness in the painting and at the same time giving the figure an expressionist character.

The inscription *Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΑΘΑΝΑCΙ(ΟC) ΑΛΕΞΑΝ-ΔΡΕΙ(ΑC)* ('Saint Athanasios of Alexandria') is painted in sections within circles, as is common in icons by painters from the Kastoria workshop at the end of the 15th century,[2] and the lettering recalls inscriptions in monuments decorated by the same artistic movement.[3]

The overall execution of the icon associates it with paintings by the above workshop, especially icons of Saint Nicholas from the town of Kastoria, Ohrid[4] and Veria,[5] dating from the middle of the 15th century. The exaggerated stylisation of the facial features in the icon of Saint Athanasios from Berat, and the rather careless execution, assign it to the output of the workshop at the end of the 15th to the beginning of the 16th century.

Unpublished

1. See *PG* XXV, 221-240, 248-410, 595-642, 691-796.
2. See cat. no. 5.
3. See cat. no. 6.
4. See p. 38.
5. Papazotos 1995, nos. 90, 98.



7. Christ Zoodotes ('the giver of life')

106.5 x 69 x 4.7 cm.
Inv. no. IN 5094
Provenance: Unknown
Date: 1542-1551
Painter: Frangos Katelanos (attributed)

The dimensions of this fine icon of Christ, with his noble, distant expression, and the meticulous execution and decoration suggest that it adorned the templon of a church. The gold ground, the raised, integral frame, the finishing with a line of vermilion, the delicately decorated circles and panels containing inscriptions, the gold striations on the garments, and the large gilded plaster halo with relief floral patterns – all these demonstrate the skill of the painter and the demands of the person who commissioned the icon to adorn some unknown church. The work is damaged particularly on part of the right side, where the painted surface is entirely destroyed.

O I(HCOY)C X(PICTO)C O ZΩOΔOTHC ('Jesus Christ the giver of life') is depicted frontally from just below the waist, wearing a purple *chiton* with a wide *sema* on the shoulder, and a dark blue *himation*, blessing with his right hand and holding an open gospel book in his left. The modelling of the face is characterised by a strong contrast between light and shade, and the eyes, in particular, are sunk deep in the sockets, making Christ's gaze even more distant. The dark brown preparation is lightened by pink on the forehead and cheeks. Fine parallel brushstrokes shape the eyebrows, and the hair, gathered behind his shoulders, is bordered by a dark outline. Wide pleats form geometric shapes in the *himation*, delicately adorned with gold striations. Christ's face is surrounded by a halo with relief designs of flowering shoots and the inscription *O ΩN* ('the Being') on the arms and upright of the cross.

The same features of technique and artistic execution are to be found in a series of portable icons, mainly from Thessaloniki, which have been convincingly associated with the art of the very competent painter Frangos Katelanos,[1] *τοῦ εὐτελεστάτου Φράγγου τοῦ Κατελλάνου ἐκ Θηβῶν τῆς Βοιωτίας* ('the most humble Frangos Katelanos of Thebes in Boeotia') as he signed himself in 1560 in the chapel of Saint Nicholas in the Monastery of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos,[2] his only signed work. The group of works attributed to him, wall-painted ensembles in the Myrtia Monastery in Aitolia, parts of the Philanthropinon Monastery in Ioannina,[3] the Varlaam Monastery at Meteora, and in Kastoria and the area of Kozani, cover a period of about fifty years from 1539 to 1590.[4]

After cleaning a valuable detail was revealed on the green ground of the icon of Christ *Zoodotes*: the date *ETOYC ZN[.]* ('the year *ZN[.]*') from the beginning of the world, the last letter of which is unfortunately lost. The icon in the Korcë Museum may thus be dated between the years 1542 and 1551 after the birth of Christ, to the first period of activity of the highly competent painter Frangos Katelanos, who had a decisive influence on the art of north-west Greece in the 16th century.

Unpublished

1. Aspra-Vardavaki 1985-1986. Tourta 2002.
2. Semoglou 1998.
3. Acheimastou-Potamianou 1955 and 2004.
4. See Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 76-79, with bibliography.



8. Christ Great High Priest 'in glory' and four hierarchs

37.5 x 46.5 x 3.8 cm.
Inv. no. SR 186 (IN 5144)
Provenance: Kamena Monastery, Sarandë
Date: 16th century
Art of Markos Bathas

In this fine icon of Cretan art the harmonious range of light colours mitigates the severe disposition of the figures. At the centre is a representation of Christ 'seated in glory', encircled by the symbols of the evangelists and accompanied by four hierarchs. *Ο Ι(ΗCΟΥ)C Χ(ΡΙCΤΟ)C* ('Jesus Christ'), King of Kings and Great High Priest, dressed in a prelate's *sakkos* and wearing a mitre with *perpendulia*, sits on seraphim with his feet resting on winged wheels and surrounded by the four symbols of the Apocalypse. The lion, calf, eagle and angel are accompanied by the corresponding initials of the evangelists: *Μ* (Mark) *Λ* (Luke) *ΙΩ* (John) and *Μ* (Matthew). Christ blesses with his right hand and in his left holds a gospel book open at the passage: *Η ΒΑCΙΛΕΙΑ Η ΕΜΗ ΟΥΚ ΕCΤΙΝ ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΚΟCΜΟΥ ΤΟΥΤΟΥ ΕΙ ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΚΟCΜΟΥ* ('My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world') (John 18, 36). To right and left of him are depicted four hierarchs, standing with their feet resting on the green ground: *Ο ΑΓ(ΙΟC) ΒΑCΙΛΕΙΟC, Ο ΑΓ(ΙΟC) ΙΩ(ΑΝΝΗC) Ο ΧΡΥ(CΟCΤΟΜ)ΟC, Ο ΑΓ(ΙΟC) ΓΡΙΓΩΡΙC Ο ΘΕΟΛΩΓΟC* and *Ο ΑΓ(ΙΟC) ΑΘΑΝΑCΙΟC ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧ(ΗC) ΑΛΛΕΞ[Α]ΔΡΕΙΑC* ('Saint Basil, Saint John Chrysostomos, Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint Athanasios the Patriarch of Alexandria') with haloes indicated by incised circles. The four saints piously hold closed gospel books. The painter varies the positions of the hands and books to influence the visual effect and at the same time to emphasise the particular significance of each saint. Athanasios is the only one holding the book upright with his hand covered by his *omophorion* and *phelonion* in an indication of great respect, Gregory holds his low down, with his hand covered by the *phelonion*, while the other two hierarchs have their hands exposed.

The painted surface of the icon is in a good state of preservation, with a few damaged areas near the horizontal crack and at the bottom. It is bordered by a thin red line, and the background is decorated with gold. The sense of luxury is intensified by the gold and the precious stones that adorn the mitre and the hems of Christ's *sakkos*, the *epitrachelia*, *epigonatia* and the gospel books.

The iconographic type of Christ in glory, inspired by the books of the prophets, is found rarely in manuscripts and portable icons of the Byzantine period, as in the Palaeologan icon in the Hellenic Institute in Venice.[1] In the present icon it is combined with the type of the King and Great High Priest, accompanied by the three hierarchs and Athanasios the Great, in an iconographic amalgam presumably created by an inspired Cretan painter. Particular prominence is given in the icon to the presence of Saint Athanasios, the only hierarch holding up the closed gospel book.

The execution of the icon exhibits admirable care and drawing skill in the modelling of the faces, the treatment of the symbols of the evangelists and the drapery (which renders the pleats of the soft fabrics), the gold-embroidery, the precious stones and the fringes of the *epitrachelia* and *epigonatia*. Free brushstrokes emphasise the facial features of the figures.

The severe, repeated stances of the four hierarchs are alleviated by the harmonious alternation of the colours of the garments, the predominant tones of which are rose-red and white, softened by touches of pink, grey and ochre.

The soft modelling of the faces, the nature of the chiaroscuro, and the use of pink tones are associated with the style of the famous Cretan painter Michael Damaskinos,[2] though the painter of the present icon seems more measured and conservative in his innovations. His work is formed gentle, harmonious and simple, though it lacks the power of the painting of Damaskinos.

The organisation of the drapery in broad curves and triangles, the lively colours with a rich range of tones, and also the round, fleshy face of the angel link this icon rather with the art of the Cretan painter and miniaturist Markos Bathas, especially with the signed icon of Saint John the Baptist preserved in the monastery of this name on the island in the lake of Ioannina.[3] The painter, Bathas, lived in Vevice and died there in 1578,[4] and only three signed icons by him are known in Ioannina.[5]

This outstanding 16th-century Cretan icon is associated directly with his art, and its discovery in the Kamena Monastery at Sarandë indicates that there was a circle in this area of southern Albania that was in contact –probably via nearby Korcë– with Cretan painters of recognised repute.

Unpublished

1. See Chatzidakis 1962, no. 2.
2. Chatzidakis 1987, 241-253. Konstantoudaki-Kitromilidou 1988.
3. Acheimastou-Potamianou 1975-1976, 113-133.
4. For the painter see Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 397-399.
5. Acheimastou-Potamianou 1975-1976. See and Vocotopoulos 1977, 127-131.


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9. Saint Nicholas enthroned, with scenes of festivals and saints

42 x 31 x 3.2 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3672
Provenance: Church of Saint Nicholas, Berat
Date: Last decades of the 16th century
Painter: Georgios Klontzas

The small icon, which is only 40 cm. high and 30 cm. wide, is adorned by forty miniature scenes, 5.4 cm. high and 3.7 cm. wide, surrounding a central representation. The work immediately gives a sense of the luxury, eclectic iconographic language, and superb competence as a miniaturist of its creator.

Before cleaning and conservation, the icon had damage to the painting and preparation, extensive burn marks and distinct craquellure, with the result that it was impossible to identify or recognise the subject. The greatest damage was to the central scene and the eighteen panels at the right and bottom part of the icon.

The work carried out by the Museum's conservators uncovered a work by an outstanding miniaturist, who organised a rare iconographic composition, with scenes of festivals and saints in the form of a *menologion* around a central scene, using mainly shades of red and blue in a sage balance. Despite the extensive damage, it is possible to make out the tall, willowy figures with their highly expressive faces and hands with long fingers. The background of the icon is gold, and the scenes are separated by a double black line, while the frame is adorned by a band of vermilion. The same colour is used for the inscriptions accompanying the festivals and saints. The originality of the composition, the competence of the miniatures, the facial types and the colour scale link this work with the output of a Cretan workshop of the 16th century.

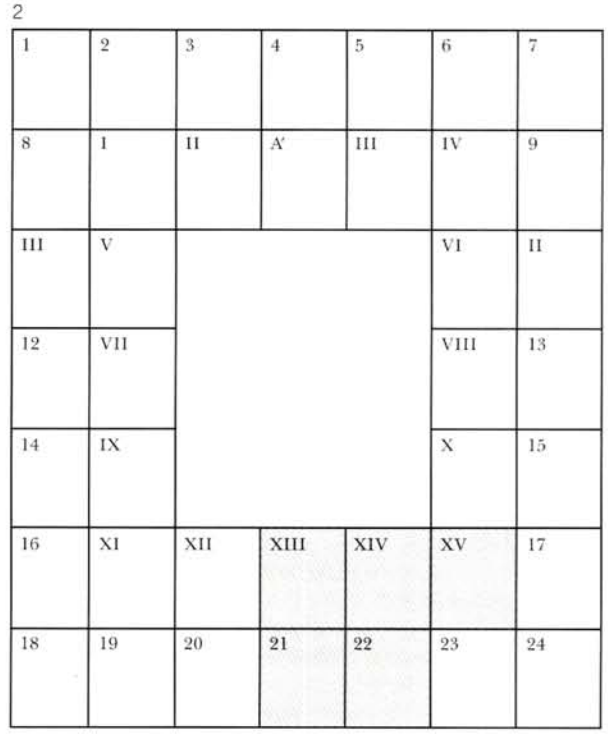
The painter's signature, a mere 2.7 cm high and 2 cm. wide, and with black majuscule letters 0.6 cm. high, can be made out only with difficulty, on account of the damage, at the bottom of the throne in the central representation of the icon: *XEI[P] ΓΕ[Ω]/ΡΓΙΟΥ· ΤΑΥ/ΤΗΝ ΛΑΒ[ΩΝ] / [μέμνησο προ]φρον[ως]* ('the hand of Georgios; when you take this [icon], remember [me] kindly').

In the last line are traces of minuscule script, of which the letters ...*φρον*..., can be distinguished, part of the learned phrase *μέμνησο προφρόνως* ('remember kindly'), with which Georgios Klontzas, a cultured painter, familiar with Byzantine *ekphraseis*, signed three portable icons and a manuscript: the three hierarchs in Paris,[1] Saint Titus in the Vatican,[2] the triptych on Patmos,[3] dated by M. Chatzidakis to between 1580 and 1600, and the Marcian codex, between 1590 and 1592.[4] For some unknown reason, the painter did not sign his surname, as in the fourteen signatures on works by him known to date, though the script of these does exhibit an affinity with the signature on the present icon.[5]

The painter was born about 1530 at Heraklion on Crete and was one of the most productive painters of his time. He kept a painting workshop in Heraklion and was also a distinguished scribe and painter of miniatures. Archive documents provide considerable evidence for his life and property at Heraklion, as well as the statement that in the year 1566 he undertook to value a painting by Domenikos Theotokopoulos. His death is placed in the first decade of the 17th century, and his art was continued by his painter-sons.[6]

In the central scene of the present icon, all that can be made out of the completely destroyed figure of an enthroned saint is the throne and the red cushion. To the right and left of the saint's head, Christ, with the inscription *O ΩN* ('the Being') on his halo, and the Virgin with the inscription *M(HTH)P Θ(EO)Y* ('Mother of God'), emerge from clouds. The *omophorion* in the Virgin's hands and the inscription *NIKO[ΛΑΟΣ]* ('Nicholas') support the identification of the cen-

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1. The icon before conservation.

2. Drawing showing the arrangement of the scenes in the icon.



tral figure of the icon with the enthroned Saint Nicholas, to whom Christ and the Virgin proffer a gospel book and *omophorion*, the symbols of the office of bishop.

The scenes surrounding the central representation are organised in two cycles, one of festivals and one of saints. The outer zone around the edge contains twenty-four scenes from the New Testament (drawing, nos. 1-24) The inner zone is organised in fifteen panels, with depictions of saints in pairs (drawing, nos. I-XV). The sixteenth panel, which occupies a position of special importance, since it crowns the main subject of the icon, contains a depiction of *ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑC* ('the Holy Trinity') (drawing, no. A) with the inscription *Ο ΩΝ* ('the Being') on the haloes of the Father and Son.

The identification of the scenes and persons proved to be very difficult, especially in the lower part of the icon, and was based on dimly distinguishable figures and traces of semi-fugitive lettering. The two destroyed scenes in the outer zone at the bottom, depicting festivals, remain completely unidentified (drawing, nos. 21, 22), as do the three in the inner zone (XIII, XIV, XV), which probably depicted pairs of saints.

In the seven scenes in the top row (drawing, nos. 1-7), the iconographic account of the most important festivals of the church year begins with the month of September and the birth of the Virgin (*Η ΓΕΝΝΗCIC ΤΗΣ Θ(ΕΟΤΟ)ΚΟΥ*) and the Elevation of the Cross (*Η ΥΨ[ΩCIC] ΤΟΥ CΤΑΥΡΟΥ*). These are followed by November, with the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple (*[ΕΙCΟ]ΔΙΑ ΤΗΣ Θ(ΕΟΤΟ)ΚΟΥ*), December, with the Nativity of Christ, January, with the Baptism, February with the Presentation in the Temple (*ΥΠΑΠΑΝΤΗ*) and March, with the Annunciation. The fixed feasts are followed in the side panels (drawing, nos. 8-17) by representations of the ten Sundays from the Entry into Jerusalem until Pentecost, with the addition of Orthodox Sunday at the end.

The representation of the Entry into Jerusalem (*Η ΒΑΙ[ΟΦΟΡΟC]*) is followed by the Resurrection, Thomas Sunday (*ΚΥ(ΡΙΑΚΗ) ΤΟΥ [ΘΩΜΑ]*), Sunday of the Holy Women at the Tomb (*[ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ] ΤΩΝ ΜΥΡΟΦΟΡΩΝ*), Sunday of the Paralysed Man (*ΚΗ[ΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΟΥ ΠΑ]ΡΑΛΥΤΟΥ*), probably Sunday of the Blind Man (*ΚΗ[ΡΙΑΚΗ]*), and Sunday of the Samaritan Woman (*[ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ] ΤΗΣ CΑΜΑΡ[ΕΙΤΙ-ΔΟC]*). The following scenes depict the Sunday, probably, of Pentecost (*ΚΗ[ΡΙΑΚΗ]*), The Ascension (*Η [ΑΝ]ΑΛΗ[Ψ]IC ΤΟΥ Χ(ΡΙCΤ)ΟΥ*), which normally precedes Pentecost, and the Sunday of Fasting (*ΚΗ[ΡΙΑΚΗ] ΤΩΝ Ν[ΗCΤΕΙ]ΩΝ*), the first Sunday of Lent -the great festival of Orthodoxy and the restoration of the icons.

Only five of the seven scenes in the bottom row can be identified (drawing, nos. 18-24): the Transfiguration (*Η ΜΕΤΑΜΟΡΦΩCIC ΤΟΥ Χ(ΡΙCΤ)ΟΥ*), the Assembly of Angels (*Η CΥΝΑΞΗC ΤΩΝ ΑΡΧΑΓ-ΓΕΛΩΝ*), and the Forty Martyrs condemned by the emperor Licinius to spend a night naked in the freezing waters of the lake of Sebasteia. The next two unidentified scenes are followed by two festivals of the summer months, the Assembly of the Apostles and the Dormition of the Virgin.

In the inner zone (drawing, nos. I-XV), the depiction of the saints begins in the month of September with Symeon the Stylite and the figure of a saint wearing a red *chiton*, blue *himation* and holding an open scroll, who is possibly to be identified with Saint John the Theologian, whose *Metastasis* is celebrated on 26 September. From the month of October is a depiction of Saint Demetrios wearing military uniform, and holding a spear and shield, and probably Saint Nestor next to him, while from November are depicted a martyr and Saint Catherine wearing royal raiment, and holding a palm branch and a martyr's cross in her hands. For December there are three panels. In the first are depicted a saint holding a martyr's cross and a closed scroll and Saint Savvas, an ascetic wearing a mitre and holding a rosary. In the second is Saint Spyridon wearing prelate's vestments, and a saint wearing monk's garb and holding a rosary. The third contains a figure identified by



The church of Saint Nicholas at Berat.

the inscription *ο οσιος ΜΑΡΚΟC* ('Saint Mark') as the saint martyred under Diocletian along with Saint Sebastian, whose feast is celebrated on 18 December. The other figure holds an open scroll with the passage: *ζῆλον ἐζήλωσε κυρίου*...('he was zealous for my sake'), which is associated with the just priest Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, in accordance with the extract of the Old Testament: *καὶ ἐλάλησεν Κύριος πρὸς Μωυσῆν λέγων· Φινεὲς υἱὸς Ἐλεάζαρ υἱοῦ Ἀαρὼν τοῦ ἱερέως κατέπαυσε τὸν θυμόν μου ἀπὸ υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐν τῷ ζηλῶσαί μου τὸν ζῆλον ἐν αὐτοῖς*... ('And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Phinehas the son of Eleazar hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them ...') (Numbers 25, 10-11). Phinehas is celebrated on 12 March, according to the church calendar, and is the only one of the saints who can be made out in the scene, holding an inscribed scroll.

The Sermon of John the Baptist to the Jews in the month of January, is the only scene from the zone of saints in which only a single saint is depicted. The scene is found mainly in illustrated gospel books, and very rarely in monumental paintings illustrating 7 January, as in the mural *menologion* in Staro Nagoričino. There are very few known portable icons with the life of John the Baptist.[7]

In the following scene, one of the figures, wearing prelate's vestments, is Saint Charalambis, whose feast is in February. The next two panels have depictions of two monks-saints holding rosaries, and two unidentified saints. Of the following two saints wearing prelate's vestments, one is identified with Cyril, the archbishop of Alexandria, who is celebrated in January. The next scene in the zone of saints contains two military saints. One, wearing a cuirass and holding a spear, is probably Saint George, and the other, accompanied by the inscription *CΤΡΑΤΗ[ΛΑΤΗC]*,





is Saint Theodore. The two saints-martyrs and dragon-slayers are depicted together from the very Early Byzantine period. Pairs of saints were probably depicted in the next three panels, which are destroyed.

Amongst the twelve representations of saints identified so far, it may be noted that only John the Baptist is depicted alone, in the rare scene of the Sermon to the Jews. The monks-saints create a special impression, depicted with large, prominent rosary, like the monks in the icon in the Sinai Monastery signed by the same painter and depicting the Fathers of Raithou.[8] Despite their small dimensions, the facial types of the hermits and monks with the long beard in this icon recall the figures of the monks in the Sinai icon just mentioned.

The iconographic rendering of the calendar in the icon is connected with the *Menologion*, one of the most important liturgical books of the Orthodox Church, which contains the fixed calendar of feasts, starting on 1 September. Towards the end of the 10th century, Symeon the Metaphrast[9] created an anthology of the Lives of the Saints, in which there was one life for every day of the church year, leading to a reduction in the illustrations in the *Menologion*. This style was adopted by the hagiographers of the same period.[10] Illustrated manuscript *menologia* thus contained the lives of saints accompanied by miniatures, and in the 11th century, these illustrations were transferred to portable icons, the earliest examples of which are in the monastery of Saint Catherine on Sinai.[11] Later *menologion* icons, both Byzantine[12] and Russian,[13] usually include representations for all the days of each month. In corresponding Post-Byzantine icons, only a small number of the saints or feasts of a given period are illustrated,[14] as in the present icon.

It may be noted that the depiction of the moveable feasts, which correspond with the Sundays before and after Easter, recalls the similar selection made by the painter for the triptych on Patmos.[15] With the possible exception of the choice of the saints depicted for the month of December, there appears to be no reference to the central representation of the icon, Saint Nicholas enthroned, who would be expected to be accompanied by scenes of his life. Of the roughly fifty signed or attributed works by Georgios Klontzas known to date, only three, which have recently been added to the bibliography, fall in the category of icons with representations set around a central subject. These are unsigned icons with biographical scenes on the frame around a central figure –Saint Nicholas,[16] Saint Catherine,[17] and the archangel Michael[18]– which have been identified in Madrid, Corfu and Kalamata, respectively. Although there are a number of distinctive iconographic features in these works,[19] the composition of the icon from Berat is highly original.

Its structure calls to mind an outstanding example of Byzantine miniature art, the Berne diptych, executed in Venice in the late 13th century as a gift for the king of Hungary, who was born in Venice. The depictions in the thirteen scenes of the feasts of the year, the symbols of the evangelists, and the twenty-eight panels with saints were specially selected for the high-placed recipient of the diptych.[20]

In the manner in which he depicts the festivals of the year, the painter of the present icon remains true to the established representations and also to his own personal choices, as expressed in other works by him, in which the iconographic innovations are found in scenes with less formal subjects.[21]

In the representation of the Nativity, the Virgin is rendered kneeling with her arms crossed in front of her breast, in an iconographic type derived from the West and encountered in works by Cretan painters.[22] In the Elevation of the Cross, the male figure wearing imperial raiment and kneeling before the patriarch, who raises the cross, indicates that the depiction is of the annual feast of the ceremony of the Elevation of the Cross in Constantinople. This ceremony took place on 14 September in Saint Sophia, where the patriarch raised the cross amidst great splendour and in the presence of the emperor. The representation is found in Byzantine *menologia* from the 10th century onwards.[23] Although Klontzas frequently includes depictions of the Discovery and the Elevation of the Cross in his works,[24] he chooses here to depict the festival in Saint Sophia, which was of extreme importance for the Byzantines. In the representation of the *Anastasis*, the painter depicts Christ above the open sarcophagus and figures of terrified fallen soldiers, a western theme that makes its appearance in Orthodox painting in the 15th century.[25]

It has been observed of the painter of the present icon that generally speaking he accommodates both the style and the iconography to the demands of his clients.[26] The choice of Saint Nicholas for the central scene, and the fact that the icon comes from the church of Saint Nicholas in the castle of Berat associate the icon with the specific church, which is further known to have been renovated and given wall-painted decoration at the expense of a priest, Konstantinos, and his brothers in the year 1591,[27] about the same time as the creation of the icon.

At the same time, the choice of the iconographic programme, the combination of scenes and saints, the small dimensions of the icon, and the strong presence of hermits, monks and prelates of the Church, suggest that it was commissioned by or intended as a gift for a person or community of ecclesiastical character, whose patron saint was Nicholas.

Manolis Chatzidakis noted that the work of Klontzas is distinguished by an intensely personal character,[28] which ranges from the most academic style to western mannerism without

departing from the Byzantine tradition.[29] This personal character can also be seen in this particular work, in the highly original composition, and also in the sophisticated decision by the painter to develop forty-one representations on a surface a mere 30 x 40 cm. It is also expressed in the manner in which he combines the academic style with mannerist elements, following an austere model with memories of Byzantine manuscripts, and alleviating the visual effect though his elegant figures with their restrained movements. The tall, slender bodies of the saints remain discreetly mannerist, and their frontal stances are relieved by the careful balancing of the figures depicted in the same panels.

Despite their small dimensions, all the representations are self-sufficient, and have an impressively meticulous execution of detail, which can hardly be made out with the naked eye, such as the inscriptions on the haloes and scrolls, or the decoration on the clothing.

In the scene of the saints of Sebasteia, the grisaille detail of the young and aged figures, with obvious portrait features, crowded together in the freezing lake, provides an example of the outstanding skill of the painter as a miniaturist, and recalls representations in manuscripts illuminated by him.[30]

The predominance of red and blue shades in all the scenes, forming the basic colour triad of the icon along with the gold of the background, is a sage choice by the painter. It leads spectator's eye steadily to distinguish the miniature scenes, explained by the large inscriptions in vermilion, emphasises the sense of luxury and calls forth memories of Byzantine illuminated manuscripts, and at the same time stays within the spirit of his personal colour preferences.

The iconographic and stylistic choices of the painter, that produced a rather academic composition, are presumably directly connected with the commissioners of the icon. It should be noted that at this same period, in the middle of the 16th century, Onouphrios,[31] an excellent painter whose art is clearly influenced by Cretan and Western painting, was invited to paint in the town of Berat. The fact that the present icon was commissioned to a famous Cretan painter confirms that the ecclesiastical and secular officials of the town were abreast of the artistic movements of their day and with the high quality of Cretan art. At the same time, this icon is another example of the eclectic painting of Georgios Klontzas and the way in which Cretan painters of the 16th century adapted to the demands and wishes of their clientele.

Unpublished

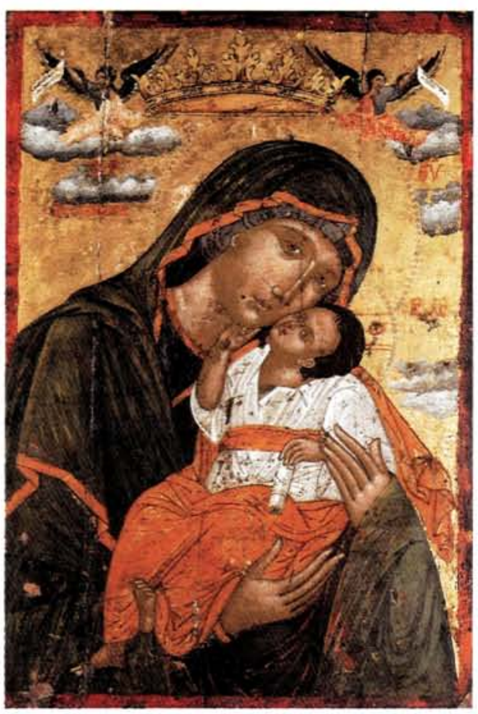
1. *Nikolenko* 1975, no. 12.
2. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 86, fig. 37.
3. Chatzidakis 1977, no. 62.
4. Paliouras 1977.
5. For signatures on works by the painter see Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 83, with bibliography.
6. For the painter and his work see Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 83-96 and Chatzidaki and Katerini 2005, note 1, with the recent bibliography.
7. Katsioti 1998, 106.
8. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 88, fig. 39 and colour fig. see Drandakis 1990, 130.
9. Ševčenko 1990.
10. Galavaris 1990, 99.
11. Weitzmann 1971, 281-285.
12. Weitzmann 1971, 284-285, 296-304.
13. Mijović 1973, 179-181.
14. Vocotopoulos 1991.
15. Chatzidakis 1977, 107.
16. Chatzidaki 2001.
17. Stavropoulou 2002.
18. Chatzidaki and Katerini 2005.
19. See Chatzidaki 2001, 395-402.
20. Historical Museum of Berne, no. 301, see Huber 1975, 152-153, 199.
21. Chatizdakis 1977, 108.
22. Millet 1916, 95. Xyngopoulos 1957b, 121.
23. Weitzmann 1971, 294.
24. Stavropoulou-Makri 1994, 481-483.
25. See Chatzidakis 1977, 179.
26. Chatzidakis 1977, 107. Vocotopoulos 1990, 62.
27. Popa 1998, no. 95.
28. Chatzidakis 1977, 108.
29. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 83.
30. See, for example, Vereecken and Hadermann-Misguich 2000, F. 26v. *Η Βενετία των Ελλήνων, Η Ελλάδα των Βενετών* 1999, fig. p. 94, no. 22.
31. See cat. no. 11.

10. The Virgin the Joy of All

81.5 x 58.5 x 2 cm.
Inv. no. IN 2688
Provenance: Korcë
Date: Late 16th-early 17th century
Painter: Emmanuel Tzanfournaris

The aesthetic traditions and iconographic preferences of Cretan painting, which derive from Palaeologan art and corresponding preferences in Western painting, are to be found in the work of a painter from Corfu, Emmanuel Tzanfournaris, in the late 16th-early 17th century. The icon from Korcë, which depicts the Virgin holding the infant Christ on her left arm and tenderly embracing him, while angels prepare to crown her as queen, was marred by little blue clouds, a later addition, which gave it a light, almost rococo atmosphere. The clouds were removed after cleaning, which also revealed the original colour of the Virgin's *maphorion* and the traces of gold at the bottom left of the icon. Careful examination under the microscope showed that this was the signature of the painter, with the letters *TZA[+2]O[+4-5]IC* forming the name of Tzanfournaris.

The icon before conservation.



Emmanuel Tzanfournaris was born on Corfu about 1570-1575 and attended painting lessons by the Cretan painter Thomas Bathas,[1] who had settled on Corfu. He then followed his master to Venice, where he was a member of the Greek community from 1600 to 1631, according to archive sources.[2] As Manolis Chatzidakis observes, he was a painter formed in the Greek environment of Venice, of which the Cretans, who came to Venice as finished painters, were distinguished members. The result of his personal history was an inability to decide upon a personal style: he sometimes adopted Italian paintings unmodified, and on other occasions the models of the Cretan painters of the 15th and 16th century.[3]

The present icon, with the inscription *MH(TH)P Θ(EO)Y H ΠANTΩN XAPA* ('Mother of God, the Joy of All') combines a representation from Cretan painting with roots in the art of Constantinople with a type drawn from Italian painting. The central subject of the icon is based on the Constantinopolitan type of the Virgin, known in the earlier bibliography as *Eleousa*, which is found in Byzantine icons of the 14th century.[4] The translation of the Russian word *Umilenie*, tenderness, on which the appellation *Eleousa* was based, renders precisely the tenderness with which the two figures draw near to each other: the way in which the Virgin embraces the child's body, and the gentleness with which the infant Christ touches her face. The Virgin wears a brown-red *maphorion* with an orange band at the hems, with a dark-blue dress visible at the neck. Her halo is discreetly adorned with a single row of punched palmettes, as commonly in Cretan icons. Christ's *himation*, which leaves his *chiton* exposed down to the thighs, also alludes, as has been observed, to Palaeologan icons, which follow the type of the miraculous Constantinopolitan icon.[5] This type of the Virgin was reproduced in different variations by Cretan workshops in the 15th and 16th century,[6] the main emphasis being on the mystery of the Incarnation and the impending Passion, which is hinted at the present icon by the gazes of the divine figures, which do not meet, but look sorrowfully into the distance, and also by Christ's bare foot.[7] This scene of tender sorrow is crowned with the western theme of the Virgin being crowned queen by the angels.[8] The angels, with a dancing movement and spread wings, triumphantly raise the open scrolls with texts from the *Akathistos*


ΜΡ ΘΥ
ΙϹ ΧϹ

Hymn glorifying the Virgin: *χαῖρε ὅτι ναστάζεις βασιλέων καθέδρα, χαῖρε ἀστὴρ ἐμφαίνων τὸν ἥλιον* ('Hail! For you are the King's throne. Hail! O Star revealing the Sun'). In the minuscule script on the scrolls, which is similar to that of the scrolls on the icon of the *Galaktotrophousa* signed by the same painter,[9] the use of the Latin v in place of the Greek β should be attributed to Tzanfournaris's long sojourn in Venice and his familiarity with Italian.

The soft modelling of the faces in the Korcë icon, the bright colour tones, and the form of the drapery of the Virgin's *maphorion*, with its broad, inflexible lines, are features that have also been noted in other works by the painter, and bring the present icon close to the Virgin of the Passion in Venice,[10] with which the portrait style of the Virgin is also directly connected.

The looseness in the style of this work confirms the comment that Tzanfournaris's art was not fully distilled, though it is characteristic of the stylistic and iconographic manners chosen by a painter from the Ionian islands in the 16th-17th century, who was a pupil of Cretans and lived in Venice. It is also significant that the fame of this painter, whose works are to be found in Athens, Venice, the Vatican, Apulia, Cyprus and the Ionian islands,[11] reached the Orthodox communities of southern Albania, which seem from the existence of other works of a high artistic quality in the 16th and early 17th century, to have been well informed about the artistic developments and to have sought competent painters in the environment of Crete and Venice.



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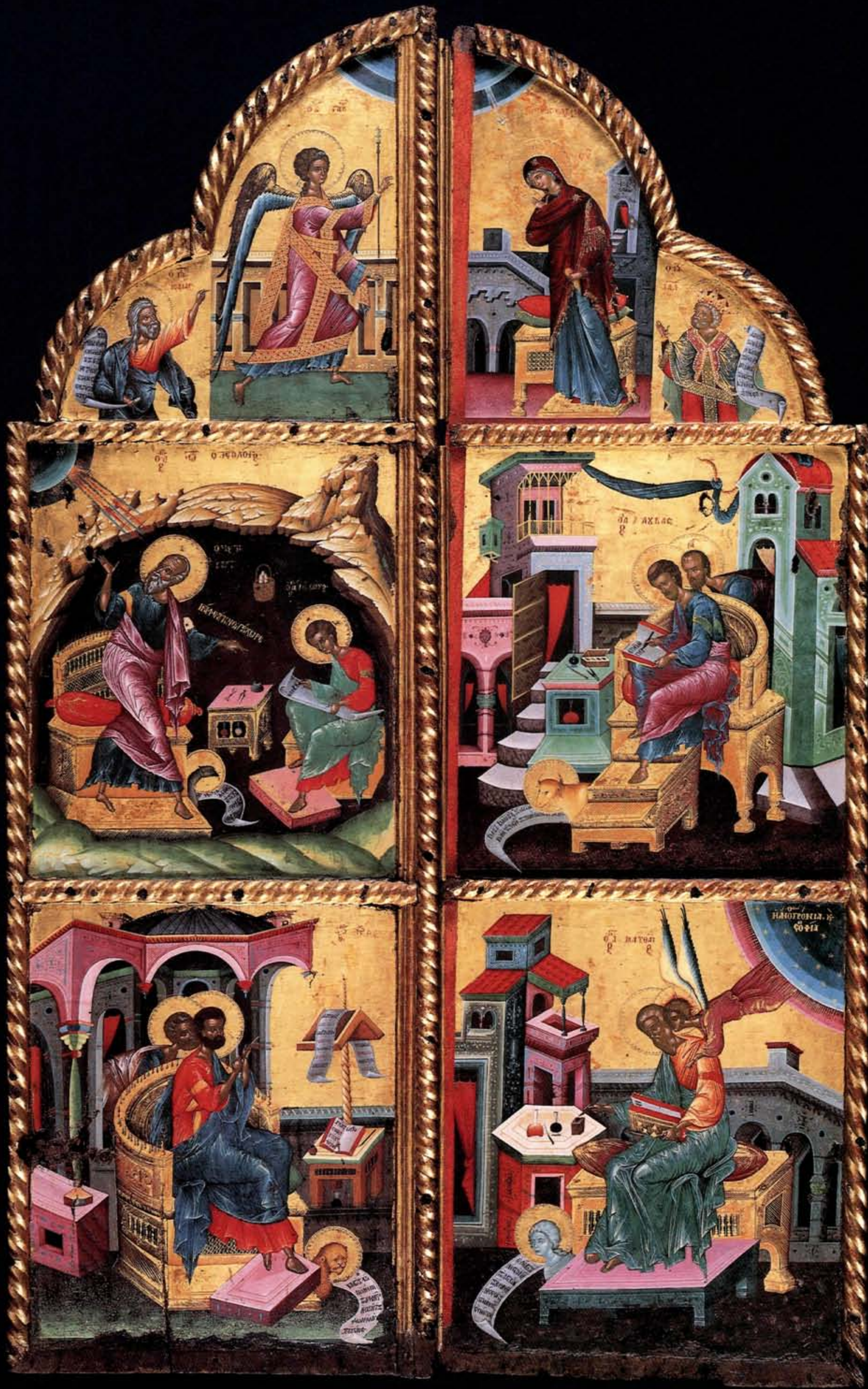
1. See Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 429-433.
2. Manousakas 1993, nos. 260, 271, 289, 346, 409.
3. Chatzidakis 1962, 93-94. See also Vocotopoulos 1990, 86.
4. See Grabar 1974. Tatić-Djurić 1976. See also Vocotopoulos 1990, 14.
5. See Chatzidaki 1997, 68, with bibliography.
6. See Chatzidakis 1974a, 180-181. Chatzidakis 1974b, 104.
7. See Baltoyianni 1994, 29-30.
8. See Charalambidis 2002-2003.
9. Vocotopoulos 1990, no. 57.
10. Chatzidakis 1962, no. 64.
11. See Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 430.



11. Sanctuary door with the Annunciation, prophets and the four evangelists

132 x 43 x 5.5 cm (left leaf)
132 x 41.5 x 4.5 (right leaf)
Inv. no. BR 63, 64
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation, Berat
Date: Middle of the 16th century
Painter: Onouphrios (attributed)

In this painting are concentrated the artistic virtues and eclectic preferences of a strong 16th-century artistic personality, the painter Onouphrios. The inspired, original composition of the sanctuary doors is handled by a painter familiar with the Byzantine manuscript tradition and with Palaeologan iconography, a learned artist abreast of the trends of western art in his day and at the same time competent in his use of drawing and colour.
The work is enhanced by the good state of preservation of the painted surface, with only slight damage to the wood-carved frame, of which a part is missing at the bottom.
The abundant use of gold is evidence for the economic prosperity of the commissioners of the icon, and also their desire to acquire a distinct group for the iconostasis of the church of the Annunciation at Berat, since the commission seems to have included all the icons for the templon. Three Dodekaorton icons from the same church are on display in Thessaloniki: the Nativity, the Baptism, and the Descent into Hell,[1] while the Presentation in the Temple, the Raising of Lazarus, the Crucifixion, the Transfiguration, the Great Deisis, and the despotic icon of Saint John the Baptist are in the Korcë Museum.[2] This ensemble of paintings is directly associated with the art of Onouphrios, the educated *protopapas* of Neokastro (Elbasan) and a painter of high-quality art in the middle of the 16th century, to whom it is securely attributed, on the basis of his signed works.
Onouphrios executed at least eight ensembles of wall-paintings in addition to Berat, in the general area of the archdiocese of Ohrid, at Kastoria, Valsh, Shelcan, Zrze, near Prilep, and Kitchevo, and seems to have travelled as far afield as Moldavia, with known dates between 1537 and 1554.[3] In four monuments, the churches of the Holy Apostles (1554), and of Saints Damian and Kosmas in Kastoria, of Saint Paraskevi at Valsh (1553/4) and Saint Nicholas at Shelcan,[4] he signed his work in the sanctuary in a way that is not commonly found, but which has special significance for the preservation of the memory and the salvation of the believers who seek to be remembered by the priest at the time for the Divine Liturgy. When he signed in the inscription in the church of Saints Damian and Kosmas: + *OTAN EIC Θ(EO)N / EKΠETACIC TAC / XEIPAC COY Ω / [Θ(EO)Y ΘY]TA MNH[CΘHTI] / [O]NOY-ΦPIOY ZΩ[ΓPA]/ΦOY IEPEOC K(AI) / ΠPΩTOΠAΠA NE/[O]K[ACTPOY]* ('When you raise your arms to God, you who sacrifice God, remember Onouphrios the painter, priest and protopapas of Neokastro'), Onouphrios added to his capacities as painter and priest, that of *protopapas* of Neokastro, as he also did in 1554 in the church of Saint Paraskevi at Valsh.
The only founder's inscription containing his signature is preserved in the church of the Holy Apostles at Kastoria,[5] in which the learning of the painter and priest is evident. So, too, is his familiarity with the manuscript tradition both in his deviations from the usual texts of inscriptions[6] and in the addition of the solar and lunar cycles to the date, which is rarely found in Post-Byzantine inscriptions, and here reflects the painter's familiarity with the manuscript tradition. The position of the inscription, too, in the centre of the north wall, between figures of saints, is chosen so as to attract the spectator's gaze. The painter's fine calligraphic lettering can be recognised in all the inscriptions of the churches decorated by him, as well as in the extensive texts he added to the icons attributed to him.[7]
According to our reading, the decoration of the church of the Holy Apostles at Kastoria: *ETEΛ-ΛIOΘH E[TOYC] AΠO AΔAM ZNE INΔ(IKTIΩNOC) E (ἡλί)ου [κ]ύ(κ)[λ]ος) K[E] (σελήνης) [κ]ύ(κ)λος ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς ἐνσάρκου οἰκονομίας τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ AΦMZ / Ἰουλίῳ KΓ / EΠEI THc APXIEPATIAC TOY ΠPΩTOΘPONOY KACTO-PIAC KYPOY MEΘOΔIOY O ICTOPICAC ONOY-ΦPIOC TOY APTH EK THC ΛAMΠPOTATHC ΠOΛEON B[ENETI]ON I OYN ΘEΩPOYNTEC EYXECTE KAI MH KATAPACTE AYTΩN AMHN* ('Completed in the year 7045 from Adam, 5th indiction, 5th cycle of the sun, 25th cycle of the moon, and in the year 1547, on the 23rd of the month of July from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, during the prelacy of the *protothronos* of Kastoria, kyr Methodios. Decorated by Onouphrios who had just come from the most brilliant city of the Venetians. You who behold, pray and do not curse. Amen').
The painter concludes the inscription with an autobiographical note, which is unfortunately difficult to interpret because of the damage at the precise point at which reference is made to the place ("the most brilliant of cities") from which the painter of the church, Onouphrios, came. This obscure passage, combined with the inadequate publication of the painter's works, has led to the formulation, from 1922 to the present day, of a series of views relating to the place of origin of Onouphrios, the most widely accepted being that he came from Berat in Albania, where he was also active as a painter.[8] A recent study in 1983[9] connected the painter's origins with Argos, reading the relevant extract of the above inscription as follows: *O ICTOPICAC ONOYΦPIOC TOY APΓITH EK THC ΛAMΠPOTATHC ΠOΛEON B[ENETI]ON* ('Decorated by Onouphrios of Argos from the most brilliant city of the Venetians'). More importantly, however, it reverted to the issue of the artistic origins of the painter in Venice, suggesting the reading



1-2. Saint Stephen and an unidentified deacon, wall-paintings in the church of Saint Theodore at Berat.

3. Inscription with the signature of the painter Onouphrios in the church of the Holy Apostles in Kastoria.

4. The archangel Michael, wall-painting in the church of the Holy Apostles in Kastoria.

5. View of the castle and the neighbourhood of Magalemi in Berat.

6. The castle of Berat.

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2



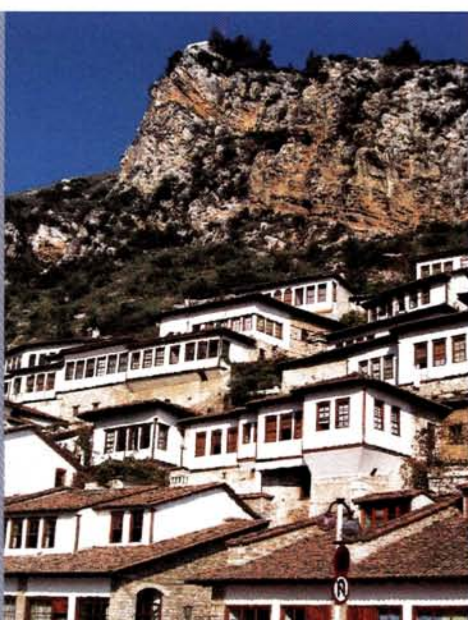
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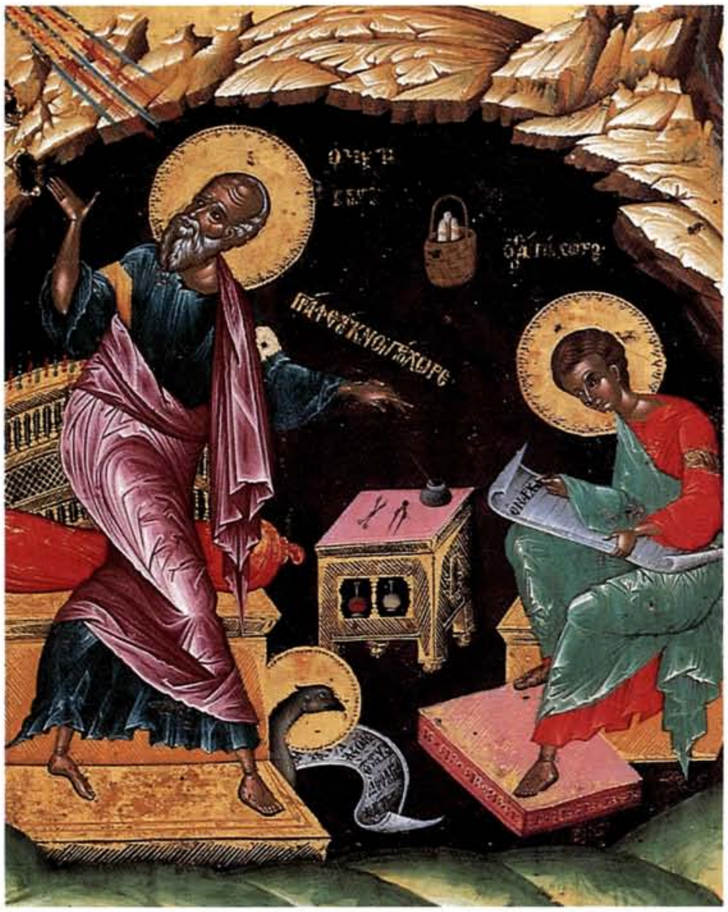


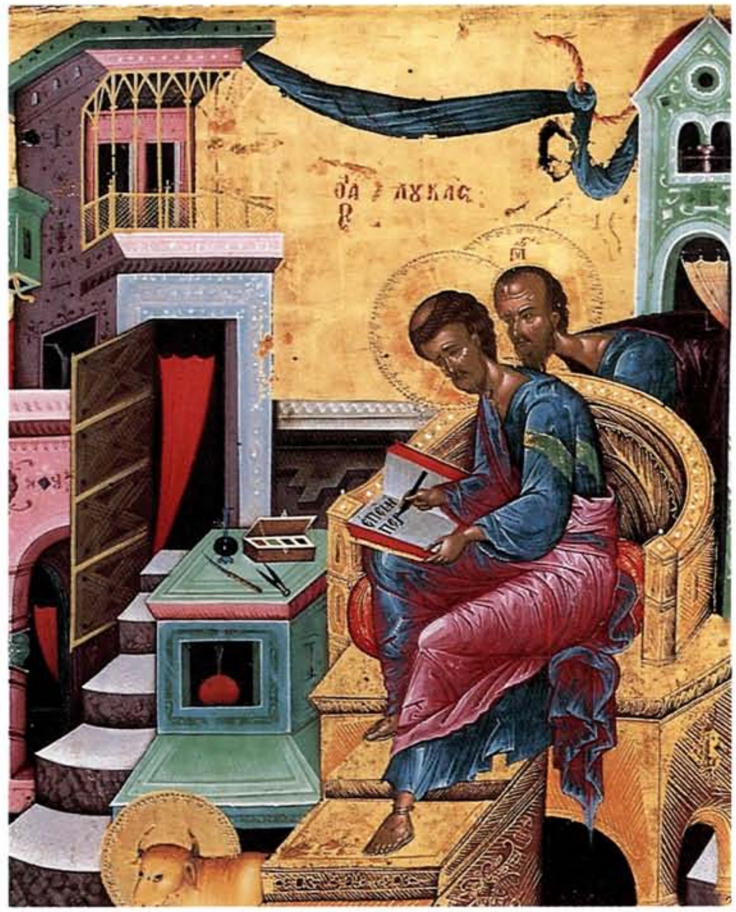
B[ENETI]ON, close to the reading *Βενετίου* for the problematic ligature, first advanced by An. Orlandos in 1938.[10] This view is based on the existence of an Onouphrios, a priest from Argos, in 16th-century Venetian documents,[11] though these nowhere refer to a painter, nor has it been possible to locate any work by him in Venice. On the basis of our own reading of the relevant problematic passage of the inscription *ΤΟΥ ΑΡΤΗ ΕΚ ΤΗC ΛΑΜΠΡΟΤΑΤΗC ΠΟΛΕΟΝ B[ENETI]ON*, ('recently from the most brilliant city of the Venetians'), we disassociate the painter's origins once more from Argos and take the view that he wished in the inscription to emphasise his recent return from the most brilliant of cities, which cannot be 16th-century Berat, but must be the famous city of the Adriatic. From the end of the 15th century, the Greeks of Venice managed to have themselves recognised as an ethnic minority, in accordance with the guild law of the period, and founded a Brotherhood (Scuola) *in questa santissima et alma città*, as stated in their request to the Council of Ten.[12] The Brotherhood, centred on the church of Saint George, developed into a centre for the cultivation of Greek education and culture, and welcomed Greeks from regions ruled by Venice and the Ottoman Turks, particularly painters, who settled permanently or temporarily in the Serenissima Repubblica.[13]

In the absence of any other evidence for the artistic training of Onouphrios in Venice, we have to be content with the testimony of his works, which reveal that the painter was familiar with western painting manners. In addition to the relevant comments on works by him published in the present catalogue and referred to below, there are some very fine icons by him, from churches in Berat, in the Onouphrios Museum in that town; they include the matching icons of Christ and the Virgin, Saints Theodore, and the excellent Deisis[14] with clear western influences, such as the relief pointed arches of Late Gothic type used frequently in the windows of Venetian buildings in the 15th century.

The present sanctuary door from the Korcë Museum also comes from the area of Berat. For it, Onouphrios decided on an iconographic combination of the Annunciation with the prophets at the sides and the four evangelists in the type of wise men writing. The Annunciation is depicted in representations on sanctuary doors from at least the 11th century, is associated with the reference to the Virgin as the gateway in ecclesiastical hymns, and is combined with prophets, apostles or other saints, usually depicted full-length.[15] In this case, the painter articulated the surface of both leaves into three zones and six representations, bordered by a twisted, gilded, wood-carved frame, and organised the depiction of the Annunciation and the prophets in double arches that crown the two leaves of the sanctuary door, with the representations of the evangelists in four rectangular panels. On the right leaf, below the Virgin and David, he depicted Luke and Matthew, and on the left, below the angel of the Annunciation and Solomon, he rendered the cave of the Apocalypse with John and Prochoros and, in the last panel, the evangelist Mark. The symbols of the evangelists: *τὸ ζῷον τὸ πρῶτον ὅμοιον λέοντι, καὶ τὸ δεύτερον ζῷον ὅμοιον μόσχῳ, καὶ τὸ τρίτον ζῷον ἔχον τὸ πρόσωπον ὡς ἀνθρώπου, καὶ τὸ τέταρτον ζῷον ὅμοιον ἀετῷ πετομένῳ* ('And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had the face of a man, and the fourth beast was flying like an eagle') accompany Mark, Luke, Matthew and John, respectively, in accordance with the text of Revelation.[16] The evangelists are projected in conventional 'stage-set' buildings with ingenious variety. The architectural structures are a dominant element in the composition, thanks not only to the imaginative combinations of architectural types, but also to their colour tones.

In the representation of the Annunciation, the archangel, wearing imperial raiment comes from the left with a wide stride, extends his right hand in a gesture of speech and holds a long sceptre, the caduceus, in his left. The Virgin, standing on a footstool in front of a seat without a backrest, indicates acceptance with one hand, which emerges from her *maphorion*, while she still holds the spindle and thread with the other. Her figure is flanked by grey buildings, and a low, ochre wall with square recesses rises behind the angel. The prophets Isaiah and David are depicted half-length, turned with lively gestures of speech to the figures of the Annunciation and holding billowing scrolls, on which can be read texts referring to the Incarnation: *ΙΔΟΥ Η ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC ΕΝ ΓΑCΤΡΙ ΕΞΕΙ. ΚΑΙ ΤΕΞΕΤΕ ΥΙΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΛΕCΟΥCΙ ΤΟ ΟΝΟΜΑ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΜΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ* ('Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel') (Isaiah 7, 14) and *ΑΚΟΥCΟΝ ΘΥΓΑΤΕΡ ΚΑΙ ΙΔΕ ΚΑΙ ΚΛΙΝΟΝ ΤΟ ΟΥC CΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΕΙΛΑΘΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΛΑΟΥ CΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΟΙΚΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΟC CΟΥ* ('Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and they father's house') (Psalm 44, 11). The type of the crown and the richly decorated royal garb worn by David are direct references to the representation of Saints Constantine and Helen attributed to the same painter.[17] In the middle zone of the left leaf is depicted *ΑΓΙΟΣ ΗΩ(ΑΝΝΗC) Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟC* ('Saint John the Theologian'), according to the inscription written in red lettering on the gold ground above the cave. In the dark opening of the cave *ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ* ('in the isle that is called Patmos'), John, standing, turns his head and listens to the words of the Revelation from heaven: *ἤκουσα φωνὴν ὀπίσω μου μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος λεγούσης ὃ βλέπεις γρᾶψον εἰς βιβλίον* ('I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet saying What thou seest write in a book'), while his other hand points at Prochoros, an indi-

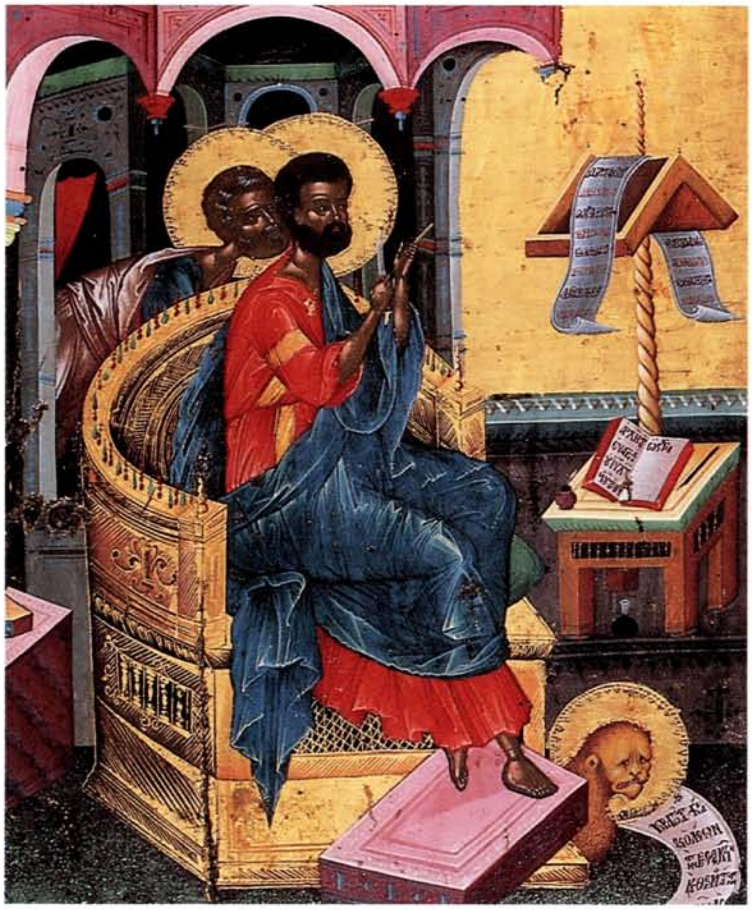


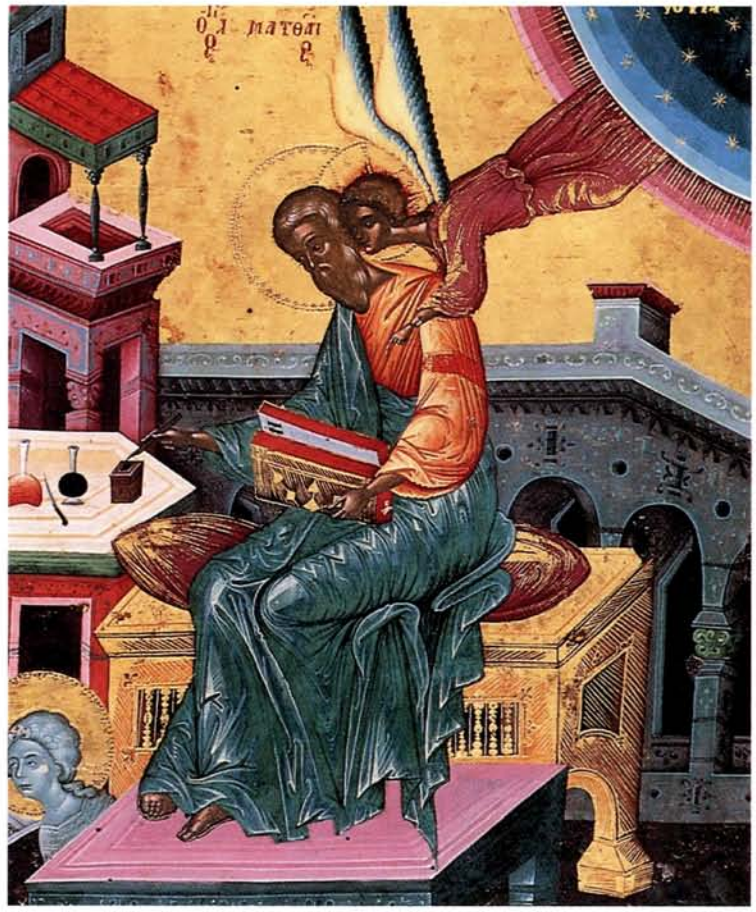


cation that he is dictating. The inscription, in gold lettering, *ΓΡΑΦΕ ΤΕΚΝΟΝ ΠΡΟΧΩΡΕ* ('Write, my child, Prochoros') explains the scene. The young Prochoros, on a low stool, writes the beginning of John's gospel on his knees: *ΕΝ ΑΡΧΗ ΗΝ Ο ΛΟΓΟC* ('In the beginning was the Word') (John 1, 1). Between them is a low table with gold highlights, on which is an inkpot, compass and scissors, and at the sides small cupboards with glass phials of ink. Towards the top, on the black ground, can be seen a basket containing the rolled scrolls with the texts. On the legs of John's gold throne, *Ο ΑΕΤΟС ΤΗΝ ΥΨΗΛΗΝ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑΝ ΚΥΡΙΤΤΟΝ* ('the eagle preaching the word of God'). Luke is depicted in the type of the wise man writing,[18] seated on a gold throne with a high footstool, on the legs of which can be seen his symbol, the calf, with the inscription: *ΒΟΩΝΤΑ ΒΩΑ Ο ΤΑΥΡΟC ΤΗΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΝ ΒΩΗΝ* ... ('the bull belows a loud bellowing'). From the tall architectural structure behind him emerges the apostle Paul, stooping, as though dictating the gospel to him –a rare depiction found in Byzantine manuscripts.[19] On the low table, next to the knife, compass and phial of ink, is depicted the open box with the artist's paints, recalling the evangelist's capacity as the first to paint an icon of the Virgin, according to tradition.[20] In the architectural composition of the representation, the two buildings, in shades of green and light cherry-red, and with drawn, red curtains, are linked by a dark blue fabric, elaborately tied with a rope that ends in a snake's head. The tall building at the left, set obliquely, with a flat roof, thin wooden railings and a lamp at the side, recalls representations in early 16th-century churches on Cyprus, such as the church of the Virgin Podithou at Galata (1502).[21]

The evangelist Mark is depicted on a high gilded throne with his knife and pen in his hands, before a tall lectern with an unfurled Hebrew scroll, from which he translates the gospel into Greek. At the base of the lectern is a book open at the inscription: *ΑΡΧΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΥ Ι(ΗCΟ)Υ Χ(ΡΙCΤΟ)Υ ΗΟΥ ΤΟΥ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ ΩC ΓΕΓΡΑ[ΠΤΑΙ]* ('The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written': Mark 1, 1), along with his pen and inkpot. Next to Mark's footstool is a depiction of his symbol, the lion, with the inscription: *ΚΕΚΡΑΓΩΤΑ ΚΡΑΖΕΙ Ο ΛΕΩΝ ΤΗΝ ΒΑCΙΛΙΚΗΝ Κ(ΑΙ) ΘΕΙΜΟΤΑΤΗΝ ΦΩΝΗΝ ΑΥΤΕΞΟΥCΙΟC* ('the lion calls with his regal voice').

From the elaborate round architectural structure emerges the figure of the apostle Peter in a stance, derived from Byzantine manuscripts, corresponding with that of Paul in the previous depiction of the evangelist Luke. Unlike





the type of the apostles accompanying the evangelists, which is rare, the subject of the angel, who seems to be dictating their texts to them, is found fairly widely in Post-Byzantine painting. The angel, the personification of wisdom, who in the present icon descends from the semicircle of the heaven with the inscription: *Η ΑΝΩΘΕΝ ΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ ΚΑΙ CΟΦΙΑ* ('providence and wisdom from on high') towards the aged Matthew, showing him the gospel, is depicted in wall-paintings of the Cretan School and the School of north-west Greece in the 16th century.[22] Matthew, with the book half-open and his pen in his hand, is depicted next to a low table, on the white surface of which can be seen phials of ink, an inkpot and the knife needed to sharpen the wooden or bone pen. His symbol, an angel, is depicted in grisaille at the bottom left, with the inscription: *Κ(ΑΙ) ΛΕΓΩΝΤΑ ΛΕΓΕΙ Ο ΑΝ(ΘΡΩΠ)ΟC ΤΗΝ ΛΟΓΕΙΚΕΙΝ ΤΗC ΕΝΑΝΘΡΟΠΕΙCΕΩC ΤΗΝ ΓΕΝΕΑΛΟΓΙΑΝ CΥΝΕΙΠΕΝ* ('and the man tells the logic of the Incarnation and at the same time the genealogy'). At the side rises a tall building with square and arched openings, a porch supported on two columns and lean-to roofs, in the same vivid red as the drawn veil at the entrance and the evangelist's table. The surfaces of all the buildings in the icon, with memories of the imaginary architectural structures of the Palaeologoi, are adorned by lion's heads and palmettes. At the same time, their arrangement in space, like that of the building in the representation of the evangelist Mark, with its grisaille interior walls and the exterior arched opening in shades of red, and also a number of individual elements such as the balcony with the railings, betray the painter's familiarity with 15th-century Italian painting.

The elegant figures with their small round heads, the finely-drawn features, the small mouth, the gently curving eyebrows, the tranquil, rather sugary expression, call to mind figures of Late Gothic painting. So, too, do the dark preparation of the faces, the stylised features, and the cheeks emphasised with red, which are found in monuments in the archdiocese of Ohrid in the 14th century, such as the church of Saint Athanasios Mouzaki in Kastoria, and the churches of Borje and Mali Grad.[23]

Colour plays a dominant role in the compositions of Onouphrios, in which there is a clear preference for shades of red, from light red and fire-red to violet and plum-red, colours that are prominent also in his wall-paintings, finely combined with shades of green.

Another constant preference of the painter is for meticulous decoration in wall-paintings, with flo-

ral motifs and imitations of marble revetment, and also in portable icons, with discreet dotted haloes and gold outlines for the faces, and abundant meticulous gold striations on the furniture and clothes.

The above features, which constitute a fixed personal style, found constantly in all the painter's works, both wall-paintings and portable icons, can be recognised in particular in the more accessible, signed ensemble in the Holy Apostles at Kastoria.[24]

The virtues of Onouphrios's painting, his originality and eclecticism, based on a knowledge of manuscript illumination and Palaeologan painting, and also of the later north-west Greek tradition, Cretan painting, and the trends of western Late Gothic and Renaissance art, seem to have been very well received in the environment of the archdiocese of Ohrid and Prilep, in the area of Albania and West Macedonia about the middle of the 16th century. The art of this learned painter was continued by named painters in the 16th and 17th century, in the works of his son Nikolaos and of Onouphrios of Cyprus,[25] and also in a series of works by anonymous painters in the general area of Ohrid,[26] testifying to his strong artistic presence and the acceptance of his art by the ecclesiastical and secular environment of his time.

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4. Dhamo 1984, 1-14.
5. Gounaris 1980, 22. Golombias 1983, 331-343.
6. See also Drakopoulou 2001, 131, 134.
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8. On the reading of this obscure passage of the inscription see Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 256-258, with earlier bibliography. See also Drakopoulou 2002, 109-110.
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18. See Hunger - Wessel, Evangelisten. See also Friend 1927.
19. See Galavaris 1979, 50-68. Bergman 1973, 48.
20. Klein 1993.
21. Frigerio - Zeniou 1998, 77, figs. 72-74.
22. Millet 1927, pl. 115.3, 195.2, 255.2.
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24. Gounaris 1980, esp. p. 94.
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26. Rasolkoska-Nikolovska 2001. Mašnić 2001.

12. The Nativity of Christ

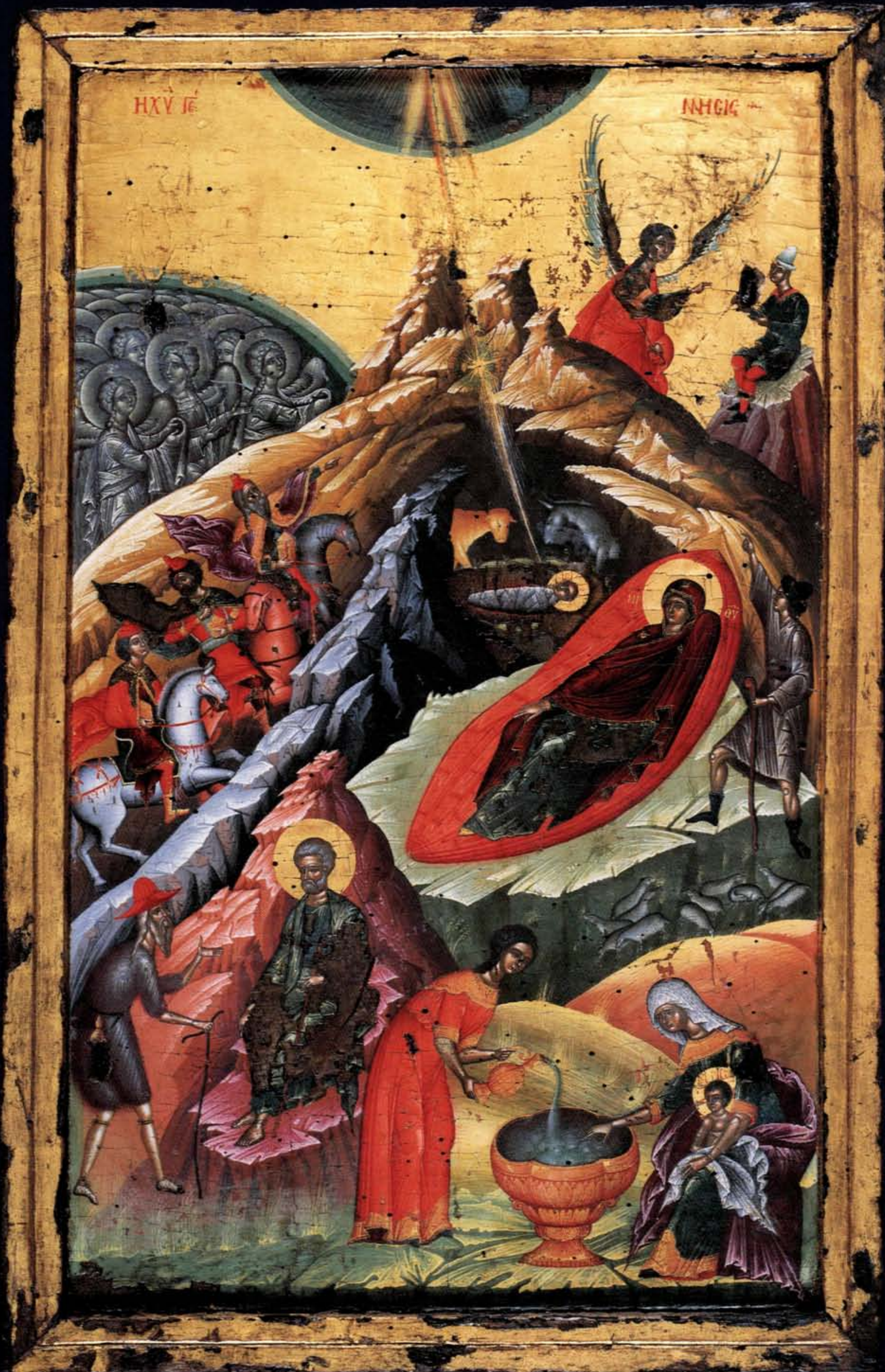
54 x 34.5 x 3.8 cm.
Inv. no. BR 53
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation, Berat
Date: Middle of the 16th century
Painter: Onouphrios (attributed)

The painter's skill in composition is revealed in the representation of the Nativity of Christ. This is organised around the central point of the cradle, illuminated by the light from heaven and the star, in a series of six episodes, skilfully independent, yet linked together on the basis of the shapes and alternating colours of the rocks on the mountain of Bethlehem.

In the dark opening of the cave, on which the steep cliffs converge, the swaddled infant in a basket-weave cradle, is warmed by the animals. On a flat area of rock, the Virgin reclines on the red litter, resting her head on one hand, while the shepherd next to her points to the star.

At the right, above the cave, an angel with raised arms, a sign of arrival, brings the glad tidings to the young shepherd, seated on a low rock with a flute in his hands. At the left, executed in grisaille, a favourite technique of the painter,[1] a representation of *πλῆθος στρατιᾶς οὐρανίου αἰνούντων τὸν Θεόν* ('a heavenly host praising God') is projected against the gold ground of the icon. At the same time, *οἱ μάγοι ἐξ ἀνατολῶν* ('the wise men from the East'), riding on horseback, ascend a long grey rock towards the cave. On the flat surface of a small rock, rendered in shades of red, Joseph sits and converses with a young shepherd. The cycle of the Nativity is completed by the young Salome and the midwife, preparing the child's bath, a scene inspired by the Protoevangelion of James.

The lean, dark-coloured figures, the great care and competence shown in the execution, the mature composition, and the rich colour tones betray the hand of the painter Onouphrios. At



the same time, preferences drawn from Palaeologan and also western models, such as the basket-weave cradle and the grisaille technique used to render the figures of the angels, who also appear in other works by this eclectic painter, confirm his knowledge of earlier and contemporary models. These are features that compose his unique personal style in other outstanding icons from the same Dodekaorton at Berat.[2]

It should be noted that the painter renders the cradle, associated with western models, in precisely the same way, with the animals facing each other behind it, and also the depiction of the half-reclining Virgin in the wall-painting of the Nativity signed by him in the church of the Holy Apostles at Kastoria, dated to 1547.[3]

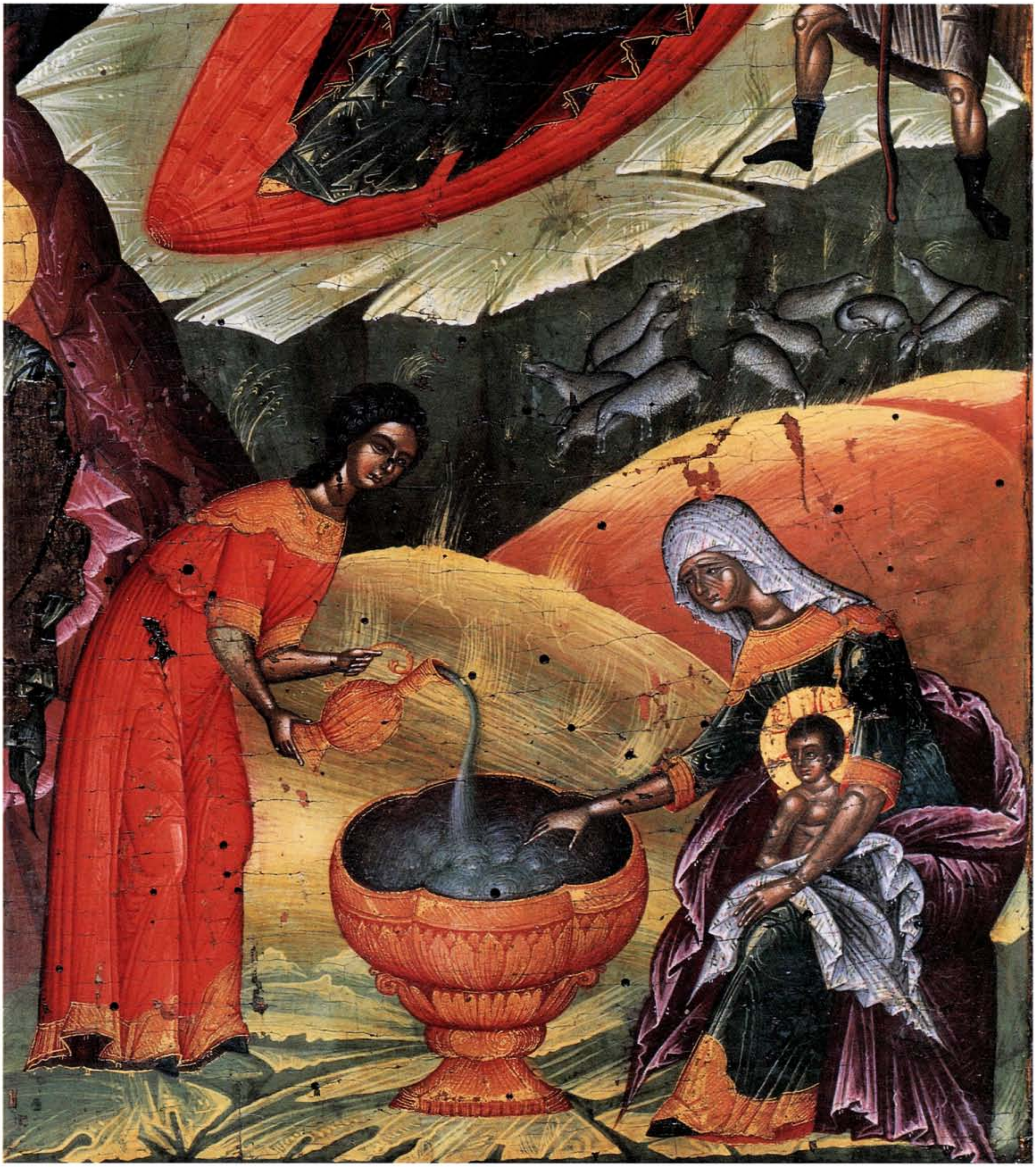
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Ikonen aus Albanien 2001, no. 5.

1. See cat. no. 14
2. See cat. nos. 11, 12, 14.
3. Gounaris 1980, 37, pl. 5β.





13. The Presentation in the Temple

57 x 36.5 x 4.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3637
Provenance: Berat
Date: Middle of the 16th century
Painter: Onouphrios (?)

The icon, with the inscription *Η ΥΠΑΠΑΝΤΗ* ('The Presentation in the Temple'), which probably adorned the templon of some unknown church, has suffered significant damage to the painted surface. The representation illustrates the passage from the gospel of Saint Luke (2, 22-38), according to which the parents of Christ took the newly born infant to Jerusalem to be blessed in the temple, following the Law of Moses. In the icon, the just Symeon stoops from the throne with four steps to hand the child to the Virgin, with his arms covered. The Mother of God, at the centre of the scene, stands on a red pedestal and appears to be listening with resignation to the priest's words: *καὶ σοῦ δὲ αὐτῆς τὴν ψυχὴν διελεύσεται ρομφαία* ('and a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also'), prophesying the Crucifixion of her son. Behind her comes Joseph, holding in his covered hands, *ζεῦγος τρυγόνων ἢ δύο νεοσσοὺς περιστερῶν, κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Κυρίου* ('according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons'). Joseph is followed by Anna, *προβεβηκυῖα ἐν ἡμέραις πολλαῖς* ('of great age') raising her right arm in a strong gesture of speech and holding in her left hand an open scroll with the well-known inscription: *ΤΟΥΤΟ ΤΟ ΒΡΕΦΟϹ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΓΗΝ ΕϹΤΕΡΕΩϹΕ* ('this infant created heaven and earth'). The figure of the aged prophetess is strongly emphasised: she is taller than Joseph and Mary and her raised arm seems to meet Christ's gaze, which is turned to her at the same level.

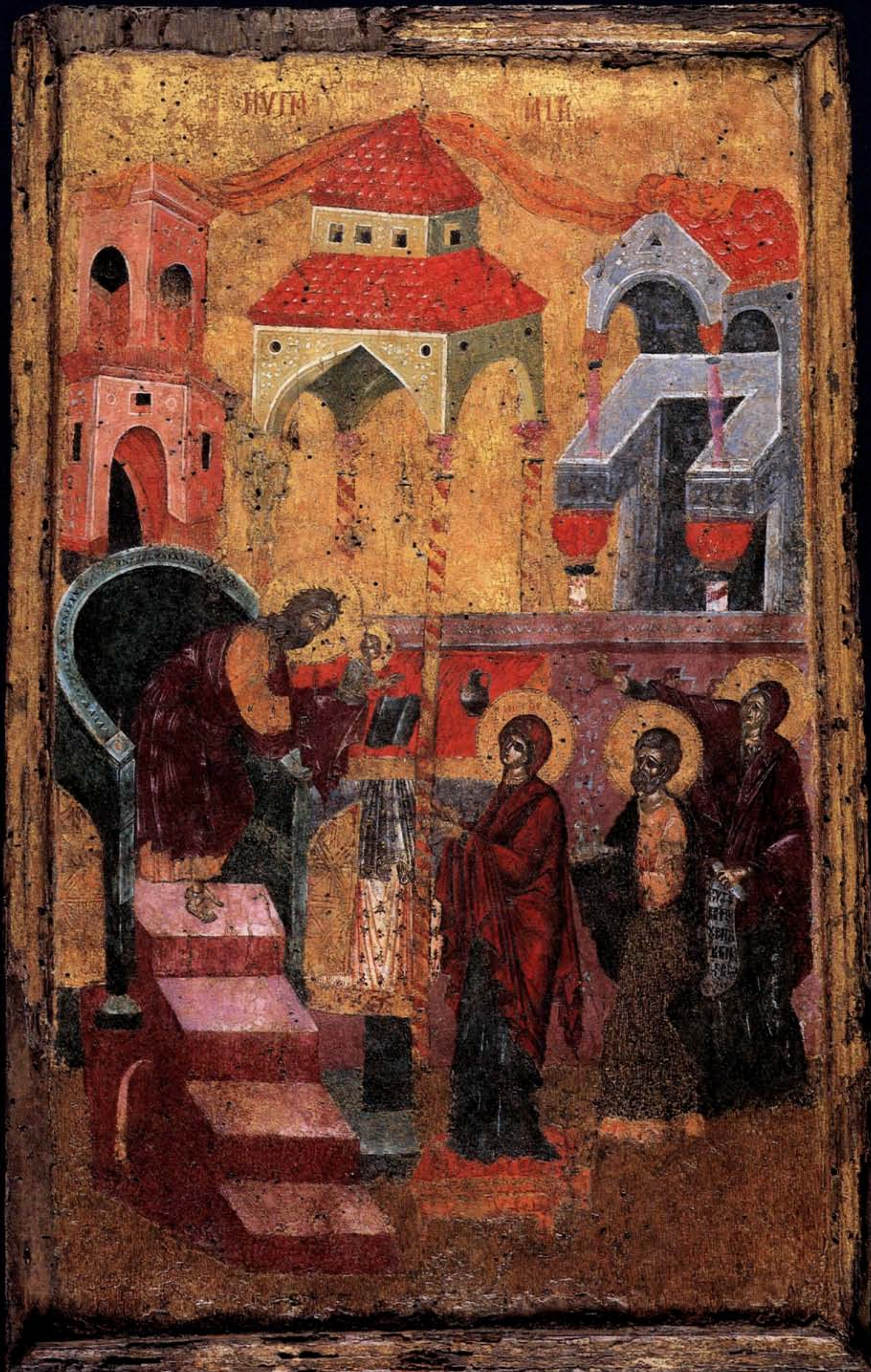
The scene unfolds in a temple, indicated by a ciborium with four columns. Between Symeon and the Virgin, who stands on a red pedestal, can be seen the altar, covered with a red cloth. The figures move parallel with the wall that rises behind them and frames the foreground of the icon. In the second plane, with a gold background, rise buildings linked together by red fabric.

The representation follows the same iconographic type as the icon of the Presentation in the Temple, securely attributed to Onouphrios, from the church of the Holy Trinity, now in the Onouphrios Museum in Berat.[1] Unfortunately, the extensive damage prevents us from drawing any certain conclusions about the identity of the painter. Despite the fact that both the iconography and the colour scale link the work with the art of Onouphrios, a certain clumsiness in the rendering of the interior of the temple and the buildings suggests that the icon was possibly completed with the aid of a colleague of the competent painter.

Unpublished

1. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 18. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, no. 56.







14. The Baptism of Christ

54.8 x 34.7 x 3.5 cm.
Inv. no. BR 55
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation, Berat
Date: Middle of the 16th century
Painter: Onouphrios (attributed)

For the icon of the Baptism, from the Dodekaorton of the church of the Annunciation at Berat, the painter Onouphrios[1] selects a representation enriched iconographical by mainly Palaeologan elements, and in which the rocks, in different tones, have a strong presence, as also in the icon of the Nativity.[2] Here, the steep cliffs rise almost to the level of the sky, from which *Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ* ('the Father') points and opens the gates of heaven, and breathes *ΤΟ ΑΓ(ΙΟΝ) (Π)Ν(ΕΥΜ)Α ἐν εἴδει περιστερᾶς* ('the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove') into the head of Jesus, in accordance with the text of the Pseudo-Gregory.[3] Between the opening in the rocks, which widens out, rush the waves of the river Jordan, full of various kinds of fish, crabs, eels and shellfish.

The prophetic text of David: *ἡ θάλασσα εἶδε καὶ ἔφυγεν, ὁ Ἰορδάνης ἐστράφη πρὸς τὰ ὀπίσω* ('The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back') (Psalm 114, 3) accounts for the allegorical representations, the personification of Jordan on two yoked dolphins, and the Sea, with crown and sceptre, on a sea monster. These iconographic details, like the pieces of rock on which Christ stands, from which snakes emerge, are found in wall-paintings dating from the 13th-14th century.[4] The Baptist stoops from the left bank, touching Jesus's head. Next to him, stuck in the tree, is the axe, symbolising the words of the prophet: *ἰδοὺ καὶ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν τοῦ δένδρου κεῖται* ('And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees') (Matthew 3, 10). On the right bank a group of angels bow with their arms in front of them, covered by brightly coloured *himatia*. Behind the banks of the river, the volumes of the rocks, in shades of red at the left and of grey and green at the right, are outlined against the gold ground. Together with the representation in grisaille of God, who emerges and opens the doors of heaven, they attract the spectator's eye, shifting the centre of the composition upwards. The figures of Jordan and the Sea, in light shades of red and gold, along with the red fishes, balance the dark colours of the river.

The delicate figures with their dark preparation, the colour choices, the eclectic iconographic models and the flawless technical execution –features immediately recognisable in other icons from the same Dodekaorton[5]– belong to the art of the painter Onouphrios in the middle of the 16th century.

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4. Millet 1916, 214.
5. See cat. nos. 11, 12. 15.



15. The Anastasis (Christ's Descent into Hell)

54.5 x 36 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. BR 59
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation, Berat
Date: Middle of the 16th century
Painter: Onouphrios (attributed)

The competent painter has rendered the meaning of the icon –the transition from dark to light– with great inspiration and originality: the brilliantly lit presence of the risen Christ, dressed in gold, is projected amidst the grey choir of angels, who hold red lamps in the shadow of the cave of Hell. The contrast is intensified by the use of the geometric shapes of the circle and the ellipse. Christ's elliptical glory, in shades of cherry red lit by gold rays, is inscribed in the perfect grisaille circle of the choir of angels. The cross with the crown of thorns on the arm, which forms an upward extension of the glory, and the gold gates of Hell arranged crosswise beneath Christ's feet, emphasise the geometric quality of the composition and draw further attention to the vertical axis.

The representation is framed by rocks at the top and bottom of the icon, where there are unfortunately several areas of damage. At the top, ochre rocks rise against the gold ground, framing the opening of the cave, which follows the circular shape of the angelic choir. At the mouth of the cave, in the black landscape of Hell with its scattered chains, rings and bars, red rocks can be seen below the naked, chained body of Satan, who has the feet of a bird of prey and a daemon's tail.

The Saviour raises Adam and Eve simultaneously, pulling them from their sarcophagi, in an iconographic type familiar in 14th-century mural painting. Adam and Eve are followed by groups of saints and prophets, to whom two angels from the choir turn and address passages from the *Apocrypha*: *ΑΡΑΤΕ ΠΥΛΑC ΟΙ ΑΡΧΟΝΤΕC ΥΜΩΝ, Κ(ΑΙ) ΕΠΑΡΘΥΤΕ ΠΥΛΑΙ ΑΙΩΝΙΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΕΙCΕΛΕΥCΕΤΕ Ο ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC* ('Let your rulers open the gates, and let the gates of heaven be lifted up, that the king may enter'), written on their open scrolls.[1] This unusual iconographic detail, with the inscriptions on the angels' scrolls in the representation of he Descent into Hell, was repeated by the learned Onouphrios in the wall-painting in the church of the Holy Apostles at Kastoria in 1547.[2]



The use of grisaille for the choir of angels alludes to works painted in the 14th, 15th and 16th century,[3] while the central iconographic type of the representation dominated the preferences of other well-known 16th-century painters, such as Frangos Katelanos[4] and Theophanis,[5] who drew on earlier Constantinopolitan and Cretan models. Icons of this period, now in the collection of the Hellenic Institute of Venice,[6] may have been amongst the sources of inspiration of the eclectic painter, who visited Venice in the middle of the 16th century.[7]

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3. See Chatzidakis 1962, figs. 15, 16. Chatzidaki 1993, fig. 14.
4. Acheimastou-Potamianou 1983, pl. 12.
5. Chatzidakis 1986, pl. 104.
6. See Chatzidakis 1962, 28.
7. See cat. no. 11.



16. Saints Constantine and Helen

87.5 x 58 x 3.2 cm.
Inv. no. BR 69
Provenance: Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, Berat
Date: Middle of the 16th century
Painter: Onouphrios (attributed)

Onouphrios showed particular care in the icon of the monarchs equal in status to the apostles, which, in view of its dimensions, was probably destined for the templon of the church named after them at Berat. In the type well established in the Byzantine tradition, the saints are depicted in a formal stance, holding the cross and turned slightly towards each other. Their luxurious royal garments are lavishly adorned with pearls, precious stones and a scattering of embroidered flowers.
At the top of the icon, Christ, rendered on a small scale, emerges from the semicircle of heaven holding the crowns for the saints.
The mature face of Saint Constantine, who is beardless and has black hair, and the aged face of his mother, modelled with dark preparation, broadly lit and strongly emphasised with red on the cheeks, are enclosed by discreet, dotted haloes.

Saints Constantine and Helen, wall-painting in the church of the Holy Apostles in Kastoria.



The painter's weakness for texts written in fine learned calligraphic lettering, with which he usually explains his representations, is evident also in this icon. The depictions of the saints are accompanied by the inscriptions: *Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟC Ο ΜΕΓΑC, Η ΑΓΙΑ ΕΛΕΝΗ Η ΕΑΥΤΟΥ ΜΗ(ΤΗ)Ρ, ΟΙ ΘΕΟCΤΕΠΤΟΙ Κ(ΑΙ) ΟΙCΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟΙ* ('Saint Constantine the Great, Saint Helen his mother, the saints crowned by God and equal to the apostles'). The initial letters *INBI* (= INRI - Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews) are written in black letters on a band at the top of the cross, and *Ο Β(ΑCΙ)Λ(ΕΥC) Τ(ΗC) Δ(Ο)Ξ(ΗC)* ('the King of Glory') on the top arm. The apotropaic and amuletic character of the cross is recalled by the cryptograms in red lettering: *Ι(ΗCΟΥC) Χ(ΡΙCΤΟC) Ν(ΙΚΑ)* and *Φ(ΑΙΝΕΙ) Ι(ΗCΟΥC) Χ(ΡΙCΤΟC) Π(ΑCΙ)* ('Jesus Christ Conquers' and 'Christ Shines on All'). The representation by Onouphrios has elements in common with but also significant differences from other known depictions of the same saints during the 16th century, in works by the Cretan painter Theophanis and by Frangos Katelanos.[1] The closest to the Berat icon, in terms of the clothing, seems to be the wall-painting from the church of the Virgin Rasiotissa in Kastoria, dating from 1553.[2] In the present icon, the crowns, inspired by western art, and the headdress worn by Saint Helen, are impressive. The white head-cover, decorated with grisaille at the hem, hangs down to the shoulders, covering the neck. This unusual choice recalls the white covers for women's heads and necks in paintings by 15th-century Flemish artists, which were repeated by Italian artists during the early Renaissance, mainly in the Pietà and venerable aged female figures. Particular interest attaches to the way in which the eclectic painter depicts the saints-monarchs in the church of the Holy Apostles at Kastoria,[3] dated to 1547 and signed by him. In this, Constantine wears the closed round crown, resembling a mitre, of the Palaeo-



logan period, while Helen, her neck uncovered, wears a western crown, identical to the one in the present icon. In both representations by the same painter a crown of thorns hangs from the cross, and large nails project from the arms and upright.

The gold and red colours lend the representation lustre, emphasising the authority of the persons depicted.

Unpublished

1. Acheimastou-Potamianou 1983, 101.
2. Gounaris 1980, pl. 37α.
3. Gounaris 1980, 73, pl. 17β.





17. Saint Demetrios *Myrovletes* and Grand Duke

96 x 55 x 3.7 cm.
Inv. no. BR 61
Provenance: Church of Saint Demetrios, Berat
Date: Second half of the 16th century
Painter: Onouphrios (attributed)

A bright icon with a representation of the warrior saint from the waist up, his delicate, reflective face contrasting with his stance and the heavy armour of the military man.

There are areas of wear on the gold ground, and damage to the painted surface, particularly to the saint's *chiton* and to the wood at the edges of the icon.

The different lengths of the sides are probably due to an attempt to accommodate the icon to the dimensions of a particular iconostasis.

The saint is depicted with elaborate, carefully worked military equipment, based on Palaeologan models. The cuirass is supplemented by a double row of leather 'wings' at the pelvis and beneath the shoulders. In one hand he holds a spear, and in the other the sword scabbard, and a double strip of metal with grisaille decoration encircles his neck and breast.

The small size of the head in comparison with the body, the sideways gaze into the distance, the high, slender neck, the single mass of the shadow cast by the nose, and the thin, arched eyebrows betray the fine-quality art of Onouphrios. An art that is also evident in the colours of the icon –yellow, light red and fire-red, light and dark violet– and in the modelling of the faces, with pink on the cheeks and neck.

In this portable icon from the church of the saint at Berat, the special care taken in the decoration is shown by the gold ground and the dotted halo, common features in works by Onouphrios. The decorated red disks with the inscriptions: *Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟC Ο ΜΥΡΟΒΛΥΤΗC* (Saint Demetrios *Myrovletes*) are associated with the epigraphic style of icons from the Kastoria workshop in the late 15th century.[1] The title: *Ο ΜΕΓΑC ΔΟΥΞ* ('Grand Duke') in Onouphrios's icon, which makes its first appearance in the iconography of the saint in the 15th century and is connected with a dream of Gregory Palamas,[2] is frequently found in wall-paintings by the same workshop. The painter's presence in the town of Kastoria, where he decorated two churches,[3] cannot have failed to facilitate his contact with the painting by the workshop that flourished in this town.

In the present icon from Berat, a close iconographic and stylistic connection can be traced with the representations of military saints that adorn the north wall of the Holy Apostles at Kastoria, a work signed by Onouphrios and dated to 1547.[4]

Unpublished

1. See cat. no. 5, 6.
2. Xyngopoulos 1975a.
3. For the painter see cat. no. 11.
4. Gounaris 1980, 74-75, pl. 19. Chatzidakis 1982, fig. p. 417. See also cat. no. 11.



Saint George, wall-painting in the church of the Holy Apostles in Kastoria.



18. Saint Demetrios *Myrovletes*

80 x 52.1 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3685
Provenance: Unknown
Date: Last decades of the 16th century
Painter: Nikolaos, son of Onouphrios (attributed)

The icon of Saint Demetrios, the work of the son of an important painter in the same iconographic type as the previous icon, is clearly and directly associated with the art of Onouphrios,[1] and forms a good example of the way in which iconographic types and colour combinations were repeated by painters of the same workshops. At the same time, however, it provides an opportunity to distinguish personal artistic preferences and skills, through the differences in the decoration and particularly in the facial expression.

In the present icon, Saint Demetrios *Ο ΜΥΡΟΒΛΥΤΗΣ* ('*Myrovletes*') is depicted from the waist up wearing military uniform that is almost identical with that of Onouphrios's Saint Demetrios,[2] and with a spear and shield in the same colour tones, dominated by various shades of red, orange and violet. Here, the painter dwells particularly on the decoration of the halo, which he fills with dotted decorative flowers and blobs. The difference between the two painters, however, is evident in the treatment of the face and hands. The figure of Nikolaos's youthful saint is fleshy, modelled in lighter tones, with the solid shadows projected by the brighter parts of the face and neck, and with a more natural expression than in the previous icon, by Onouphrios. These choices in the modelling of the figures and the bright colours and care in the decoration are associated with the art of Onouphrios's son Nikolaos, particularly with the wall-paintings in the church of the Virgin Vlacherna, the only worked by him that is dated, to 1578, and with the icon of the Virgin in the same church.[3]

Nicholas painted in the area of what is now Albania and travelled as far afield as Arbanassi in Bulgaria, with his fellow-painter Ioannis. In the town of Berat, where his father was also active as a painter, he worked both in the church of the Virgin Vlacherna and in the nearby church of Saint Nicholas.[4] He also collaborated with the painter Ioannis on the church of Saint Nicholas at Kurjan, Fier, and probably on two churches in the area of Cheimarra.[5] Notable icons by him from churches in Berat are now in the Museum of Medieval Art in Korcë and the Onouphrios Museum in Berat.[6]

The figure of the saint in the present icon is surmounted by an arch painted in shades of red and orange and brilliantly enhanced as a continuation of the gold ground, bordered by the broad light green band of the frame, which harmonises with the colour of the background. The dimensions of this fine icon of Saint Demetrios and the arch surmounting it indicate that it was set on a templon, probably of a church dedicated to Saint Demetrios.

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1. For the painter see cat. no. 11.
2. See cat. no. 17.
3. See cat. no. 19.
4. Popa 1998, no. 95.
5. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 235, with bibliography.
6. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, nos. 23-26. See also Popa 1998, no. 91.



Saints George and Demetrios, wall-painting in the church of the Virgin of Vlacherna in Berat.



19. The Virgin *Eleousa*

97.6 x 67.5 x 3.8 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3688
Provenance: Church of the Virgin Vlacherna, Berat
Date: About 1578
Painter: Nikolaos, son of Onouphrios (attributed)

The painter Nikolaos,[1] son and pupil of Onouphrios,[2] seems to have followed the artistic choices of his father, not only in his style but also in his way of working, since he undertook to execute the wall-painted decoration of churches as well as portable icons.

Given its subject and dimensions, this icon of the Virgin and Child presumably belonged to the iconostasis of the church of the Virgin Vlacherna in Berat, which painted *ὁ ἱστοριογράφος Νικόλαος ὑὸς Ὀνουφρίου* ("the church-painter Nikolaos, son of Onouphrios") in 1578, according to the evidence of inscriptions.[3] The inscription written in fine red lettering on the lower part of the icon of the Virgin: *ΔΕΗCΗC ΤΗC ΔΟΥΛΗC ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΚΟΝΤΕCΑC ΠΡΕCΒΙΤΕΡΑC ΑΜΗΝ* ('Prayer of the servant of God Contessa, [the wife] of the priest') refers to the presbyter Contessa, probably the wife of the *εὐλαβεστάτου ἐν ἱερεῦσιν παπᾶ κὺρ Κωνσταντίνου* ('most pious of the priests, papa-kyr Konstantinos'), at whose expense the church of the Virgin was given its wall-painted decoration.

Nikolaos, continuing the careful work he learned in his father's workshop, adorned the icon with gold on the ground and clothing, with discreet dotted motifs on the haloes and also around the red discs and the panel with the inscriptions: *ΜΗ(ΤΗ)Ρ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ Η ΕΛΕΟΥCΑ* and *Ι(ΗCΟΥ)C Χ(ΡΙCΤΟ)C* ('Mother of God *Eleousa*' and 'Jesus Christ'). The iconographic type selected by him recalls an icon attributed to Onouphrios and now in the painter's Museum in Berat.[4]

The Virgin, with the Child on her left side, to whom she inclines her head, with her gaze directed at the spectator, prays with the gesture typical of the *Hodigitria*.

The appellation *Eleousa* used of the Virgin, though it does not correspond with a specific iconographic type,[5] is frequently found in representations of the Virgin in churches on Cyprus, especially despotic icons,[6] like this particular example.

The passage from Psalm 44 on the hem of the Virgin's *maphorion*: *πᾶσα ἡ δόξα τῆς θυγατρὸς τοῦ βασιλέως ἔσωθεν* ('the king's daughter is all glorious within') *ΕΝ ΚΡΟCCΩΤΟΙC ΧΡΥCΟΙC ΠΕΡΙΒΕΒΛΗΜΕΝΗ* ('her clothing is of wrought gold'), an iconographic detail that makes its appearance in the 14th century, mainly in icons in north Greece, linking liturgical poetry and painting, is a reference to the royal descent of the Virgin.[7] Christ, his *himation* richly decorated with gold striations, looks seriously at the Virgin, blessing and holding a closed scroll.

Nikolaos's art can be seen in the fleshy figures and the light colours in the faces, with strong shadows at the outlines and almost stylised pink shades next to the mouth. The regular proportions of the figures in the representation are broken by the Virgin's excessively long arms.

The icon, which is damaged at the edges and has a vertical crack at the left, is dated to the same period at which the wall-painted decoration of the church of the Vlacherna was also executed, about 1578.

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Ikonen aus Albanien 2001, no. 17.

1. For the painter see cat. no. 18.
2. For the painter see cat. no. 11.
3. Popa 1998, nos. 92, 93. For the wall-paintings in the church see Popa 1966, 774. Dhamo 1974, 41, 43, 45-47 and Dhamo 1984, 87.
4. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, no. 62.
5. See cat. no. 10.
6. Frigerio - Zeniou 1998, 12.
7. Babić 1991.



The church of the Virgin of Vlacherna in Berat.



20. Saint John the Evangelist

97.5 x 62 x 2.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3634
Provenance: Church of Saint George, Berat
Date: 1596
Painter: Onouphrios of Cyprus

The impressive icon of Saint John the Evangelist, from Berat, had suffered considerable damage and the painted surface presented a major consolidation problem. After conservation, the icon was largely preserved, but there was some deterioration to the modelling of the face and hand, a crack through the centre of the icon, and breaks at the sides.

At the bottom is preserved the inscription giving the date and the painter's signature: *ΑΦϟϹ Χ(ΡΙCΤΟ)Υ Χ[ΕΙΡ] ΟΝΟΥΦΡΙΟΥ ΚΥΠΡΕΟΥ* ('1596 from [the birth of] Christ. The hand of Onouphrios of Cyprus').

The painter Onouphrios from Cyprus is known from his signature on portable icons from churches in the area of Albania, and from a wall-painting ensemble in the village of Vlachogorantzi near Gjirokastër dated 1622.[1] His icons, which are dated between 1594 and 1615 and most of which are now in the Onouphrios Museum in Berat and the Museum of Medieval Art in Korcë,[2] link him with the artistic environment of the painter Onouphrios.[3] At the same time, the votive inscriptions accompanying them indicate the painter's learning[4] and reveal some interesting factual details. For example, two icons from the church of Saint Nicholas at Sarakinista, Christ, with the date 1607, and the Virgin,[5] are accompanied by votive inscriptions by the family of Stasos and Zaphyro, written in the painter's fine large black lettering, which also reveal clearly the attempt to imitate the script of Onouphrios.

The affinity of works by the painter of this icon with the art of Onouphrios can be detected both in the iconography and in the style. One of the works by Onouphrios of Cyprus, the Deisis with the Virgin and Saint John the Baptists from the church of Saint Nicholas at Paftal,[6] is clearly a repetition of the same type of icon by Onouphrios,[7] though there is an obvious difference in the quality of the art between the two painters. Generally speaking, it emerges from his oeuvre as a whole that the painter from Cyprus, who, mindful of his origins, signed all his works as *κίπριος* or *κυπρέος*, continued the art of Onouphrios, though moving at a lower level.

In the present icon, Saint John is depicted from the waist up, holding his pen and writing the beginning of his gospel (John 1, 1) in the decorated book that is only partly open, so that only parts of the words can be made out: *ΕΝ ΑΡ(ΧΗ ΗΝ) Ο ΛΟ(ΓΟC ΚΑΙ) Ο ΛΟ(ΓΟC ΗΝ) ΠΡΟC (ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ)* (*'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God'*). This more realistic or more learned manner, which does not allow the full text to be seen, as is usually the case, is also found in 15th-century Cretan icons.[8] It is worth noting that the initial E of the inscription is written in red, treated calligraphically and decorated, like initials in manuscripts.

The plaster halo with relief designs, the larger part of which has unfortunately worn away, is commonly found in works by the important painter Frangos Katelanos, who was active in the second half of the 16th century and had a decisive influence on the art of north-west Greece.[9]

The portrait type of the evangelist is rendered with a large head and a broad cranium, supported on a short, robust neck, and a bulky body. These are characteristic of a series of icons of the holy, wise author whose air exudes profundity and authority.[10]

Onouphrios of Cyprus's ability to paint in different manners can be detected by comparison between the austerely treated figure of John the Baptist[11] and the figure of John in the present icon, with its clear western influence in the rendering of the clothing. The saint's body is covered by a *chiton* in shades of blue, impressively decorated with gold fleurs-de-lys and gold on the ornament of the sleeve and the hem at the neck. The plum-coloured *himation* with a double gold hem at the edges hangs gently, revealing an inner lining in shades of grey.

This observation of western influences on the work of the painter from Cyprus, which can also



be seen in the icons of Christ and the Virgin from Sarakinista,[12] might be attributed to his Cypriote origins, on the assumption that he left the island, probably after its capture by the Ottoman Turks in 1570, with a fully formed artistic personality. Equally decisive factors were probably the art of Onouphrios and an acquaintance with Italo-Cretan models. His weakness in the decoration of icons with metal sheathing, which could be readily associated with the similar decoration of 15th-century icons on Cyprus, is also encountered in works by Onouphrios.[13] Irrespective of the origins of Onouphrios of Cyprus's artistic preferences, the icon of Saint John the evangelist exudes the fine art and eclecticism of the painter, and the high demands of the congregation in the town of Berat in the late 16th century.

Unpublished

1. See Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 258 with bibliography.
2. See Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997. Drakopoulou 2002, 109-110. Popa 1998, nos. 96-99 and 537. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, nos. 27-32.
3. See cat no. 11.
4. See cat. no. 20.
5. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, nos. 30, 32.
6. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 28.
7. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 21.
8. Chatzidakis 1977, 62.
9. See cat. no. 7.
10. Chatzidakis 1977, no. 12.
11. See also cat. no. 21.
12. See note 5.
13. See p. 64.



21. Saint John the Baptist

93 x 50 x 3.6 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3629
Provenance: Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, Berat
Date: 1599
Painter: Onouphrios of Cyprus

The winged figure of the saint who was raised on locusts and wild honey projected in an icon with an abundance of decoration on the frame and background. He is depicted frontally from the thigh up, wears a sheepskin (*melote*) next to his skin, with a *himation* over it, and raises his right hand in a gesture of speech. In his left hand he holds a rod topped with a cross, his severed head, and an unrolled scroll with the inscription: *ΟΡΑΣ ΘΕΑΤΑ ΤΗΝ ΜΑΝΙΑΝ ΗΡΩΔΟΥ ΕΛΛΕΓΧΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΗΝ ΕΜΗΝ ΚΑΡΑΝ ΤΕΤΜΗΚΕΝ Ω Θ(ΕΟ)Υ {ΛΟΓΕ}* ('You see, spectator, the frenzy of Herod who cut off my head because I reproved him, o Word of God').

The inscription at the bottom of the icon preserves the name of the donor (the priest Andreas), that of the painter, Onouphrios of Cyprus,[1] and the date 29 September 1599. The reference to the "adorned heaven" at the beginning of the inscription seems to link the text with the rich decoration of the icon.

ΑΛΛΟΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΝ ΟΡΩ ΚΑΙΚΟCΜΗΜΕΝΟΝ Τ[ΗΝ] / CΕΠΤΗΝ ΟΙΚΟΝΑΝ CΟΥ ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΕ ΜΑΚΑΡ ΗΝΠΕΡ ΚΑΘΗ/CΤΟΡΙCΕΝ ΑΠΛΕΤΟ ΠΟΘΩ ΑΝΔΡΕΑC ΤΑΧΑ Κ(ΑΙ) ΙΕΡΕΥC / ΚΑΙ [ΚΤΗ]ΤΟΡ ΧΕΙΡ ΔΕ ΥΠΑΡΧΙ ΟΝΟΥΦΡΗΟΥ ΚΥ/[ΠΡΕΟΥ] ΕΤΗ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ Χ(ΡΙCΤΟ)Υ ΑΦϞΘ ΕΝ ΜΗΝΙ CΕΠΤΕΜΒΡΗΟΥ / ΚΘ ΗΜΕΡΑC... ('I see another heaven, adorned, your venerable icon, blessed Forerunner, which the priest and founder Andreas had decorated with great desire. The hand of Onouphrios of Cyprus, in the year 1599 from the birth of Christ, on the 29th day of the month of September').

It might be supposed that the learned inscription is owed to the priest who donated the icon, were it not for the fact that a similar inscription in an icon by the same painter, dated in 1614, suggests that the text is the work of the painter himself. The same phrase: *ἄλλον οὐρανὸν ὁρῶ κεκοσμημένον τὴν σεπτὴν εἰκόναν σου...* ('I see another heaven adorned, your venerable icon...') is used at the beginning of a long inscription on an icon of the Virgin, with the date 1614, in the church of the Transfiguration in the monastery of Tsiatista.[2] The texts presuppose the painter's learning, which is also betrayed by his cultured script and the inscriptions on other works by him.[3]



The same iconographic type of the Baptist is also found in an earlier icon with the date 1578 from the church of the Virgin Vlacherna at Berat, attributed to the painter Nikolaos,[4] who moved in the same artistic environment as Onouphrios of Cyprus.

The figure of the saint in the present icon from the church of Saints Constantine and Helen at Berat, with the severe, stylised features, is rendered in a different style from the figure of John in the previous icon. The decorative preference and skill of the painter, however, is expressed in a striking manner in this particular work. The figure of the saint is framed by an arch supported on gilded columns. The same decoration, with the gold ground, flowers painted on the arch and the border of the inscription, round



View of the church of Saints Constantine and Helen in Berat.

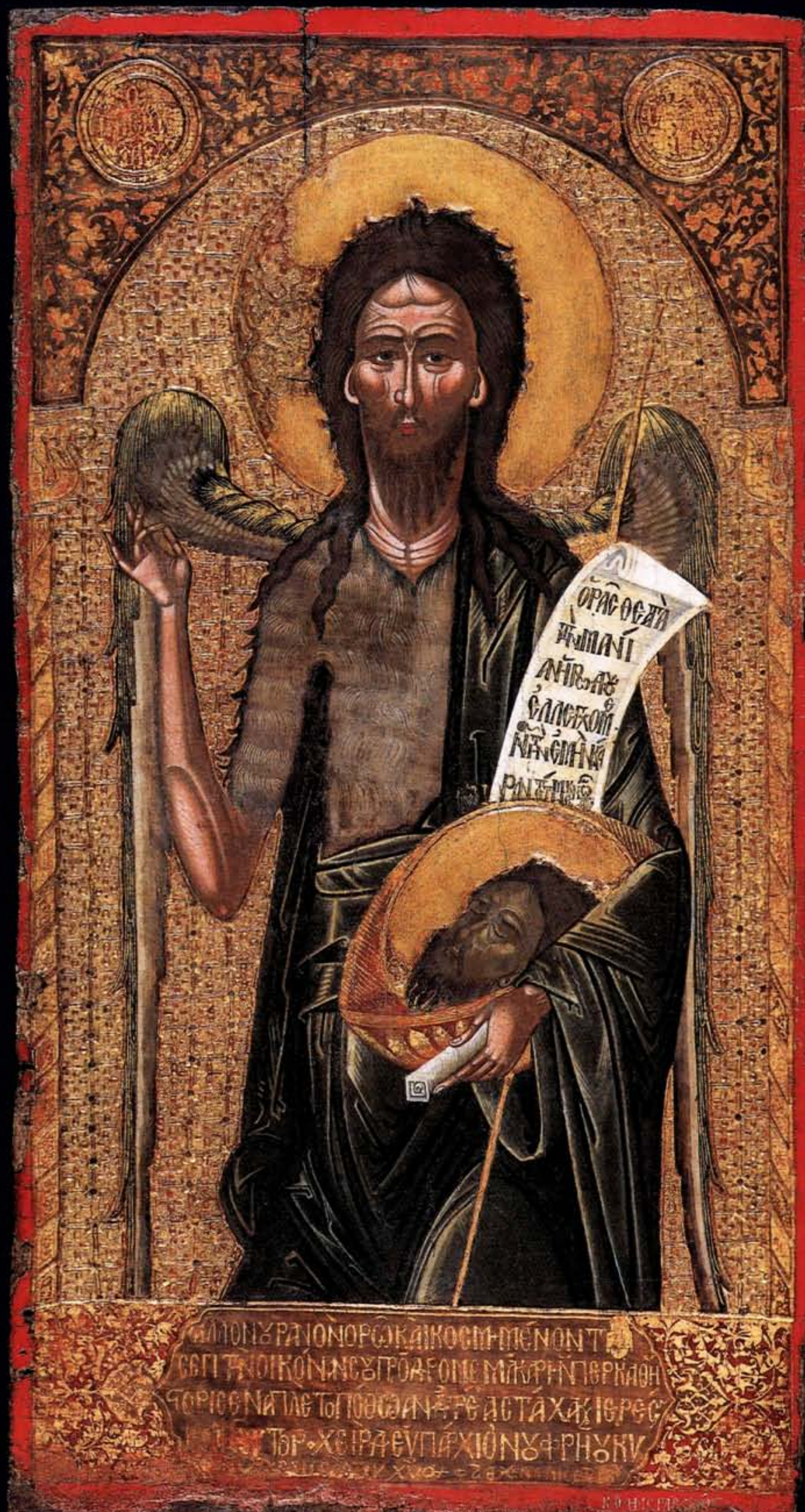
medallions and ligatures– can also be seen in other works by the painter –two large icons of Christ and the Virgin in Tiranë.[5] The metallic gilded decoration on the background and on the Virgin's damaged halo is to be found in a 15th-century icon of the Virgin *Kykkotissa* from the church of the Virgin *Chrysaliniotissa* in Nicosia,[6] and also in Byzantine icons from the same church.[7] Similar metal sheathings are to be found at a later period also, in icons from north Greece and south Albania,[8] but in this case the identification of Cyprus is associated with the painter's origins. At what age, and the circumstances in which he left the island to work in the area of Berat are unknown.

The arch crowning the icon, and the dimensions of the icon itself, suggest that it was placed as a despotic icon in the church of Saints Constantine and Helen, from which comes the icon of Christ signed by the same painter and with the date 1604, now in the Museum of Medieval Art in Korcë.[9]

The abundance of gold on the icon is an indication of the aesthetic preferences and economic means of the inhabitants of Berat who donated it at the end of the 16th century.

Unpublished

1. For the painter see cat. no. 20.
2. Popa 1998, no. 537. Onouphrios signed the icon of Christ in the same church in 1615, see Popa 1998, no. 538.
3. See cat. no. 20.
4. Nallbani 2003, 185. For the painter Nikolaos see cat. no. 18.
5. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, nos. 10, 11.
6. Papageorgiou 1969, 48.
7. Papageorgiou 1969, 89, 106.
8. See cat. no. 31.
9. Popa 1998, no. 99.



22. Angel of the Annunciation from a leaf of a sanctuary door

86.5 x 28.3 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 5670
Provenance: Church of Saint Nicholas, village of Boboshticë, Korcë
Date: Late 16th century

Virtually the whole of the painted surface of the left leaf of a sanctuary door is filled by the archangel Gabriel, a dynamic figure who, striding vigorously, prepares to offer a lily to the Virgin of the Annunciation. The figure is carefully executed, as is evident from the decoration of the halo with small triangles and stylised flowers, the fine, stylised features of the softly modelled, light-coloured face, and the well-drawn drapery, which adds a sense of volume. The repetition of the same figure of the angel on an 18th-century sanctuary door from the same area enables us to imagine the figure of the Virgin on the missing right leaf of the present door.[1]

The meticulous sculptured decoration, with the arches and open-work crowning, of which, unhappily, only two fleshy leaves are preserved, links this work with the sanctuary door in the monastery of Makryalexis in the Ioannina Byzantine Museum,[2] executed by painters from Linotopi. This sanctuary door, whose decoration imitates Cretan wood-carving, is dated to the late 16th century, the period to which the painted decoration of the present sanctuary door from the area of Korcë is also assigned.

Unpublished

1. See cat. no. 46.
2. Tourta 2001, 346-347.





View of the church of Saint Nicholas at Boboshtiçë.





23. Dormition of the Virgin

72 x 59.3 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 1442
Provenance: Church of Saint Athanasios, village of Trebickë, Korcë
Date: Early 17th century

The icon of the Dormition is dominated by figures that fill the space and emphasise what is preeminently a moment of grief, with the apostles, hierarchs and women saints standing by the Virgin on her bier.

The work, which is damaged in several places, has been sawn around the edges, except for the right side, probably to accommodate it to a templon.

John stoops towards the Virgin's pillow, and Peter and Paul sand at the right and left of the bed. On the main axis of the representation, Christ, in a bright glory and flanked by angels with torches, holds the Virgin's soul, dressed in white. In the foreground, between the candelabra with their lighted torches, unfolds a scene of violence, as described in the Apocryphal gospels. The avenging angel, with his bared sword, has just cut off the hands of the Jew Jephonias, who tried to touch the Virgin's holy body. His hands can be seen sticking to the white cloth on the bed. In the background can be seen degenerated architectural structures.

The gentle colour tones, the soft, light preparation on the expressive, sorrowing faces with their finely rendered features, and the care taken in the organisation of the drapery of the garments all recall the figure of the angel on the late 16th-century sanctuary door,[1] and date the present icon no later than the early decades of the 17th century.

Unpublished

1. See cat. no. 22.



24. The Assembly of the Bodiless Powers

65 x 42.8 x 3.3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 1386
Provenance: Village of Sinicë, Korcë
Date: Early 17th century

The Assembly of the Bodiless Powers is a representation of the triumph of the angels over the forces of evil, and is directly connected with imperial iconography, as is clear from the royal raiment, and the array and hierarchy of the angelic forces.[1] The angels, holding raised spears, will receive the order: *τοῦ πατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφεων καὶ σκορπίων καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ εχθροῦ* ('to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy') (Luke 10, 19) from Christ, who is depicted as Emmanuel, with the inscription *Ὁ Ὢν* ('the Being') on his halo in a circular glory that is supported by the archangels Michael and Gabriel. The scene is rendered with the three winged archangels standing frontally, emphasising the central feature of the composition, and the others in pairs, bowing towards the centre. In the last row, smaller heads indicate the presence of more angels.

The tall, willowy figures of the angels, with their beautiful young faces, softly modelled and emphasised by red on the lips and cheeks, and the carefully executed garments are attributed to the hand of a competent painter of the early 17th century. At the same time, the meticulous decoration on the haloes and the frame of the icon is commonly found in works of north Greek origins, such as the icon of the Lamentation at the Tomb in the monastery of Saint Paul, dated to 1616,[2] and the icon of the title from the templon of the Xenophontos Monastery, from the middle of the 17th century.[3] The dotted decoration of the haloes and the geometric floral decoration of the integral frame, on a background alternately red and blue, are thought to be features of 17th-century Athonite art.[4]



Unpublished

1. See Grabar 1936, 262ff.
2. *Θησαυροί του Αγίου Όρους* 1997, 2.82.
3. *Μονή Ξενοφώντος* 1998, 144, fig. 58.
4. Chatzidakis 1977, 182 and Chatzidakis 1987, 97.

25. Saint Athanasios

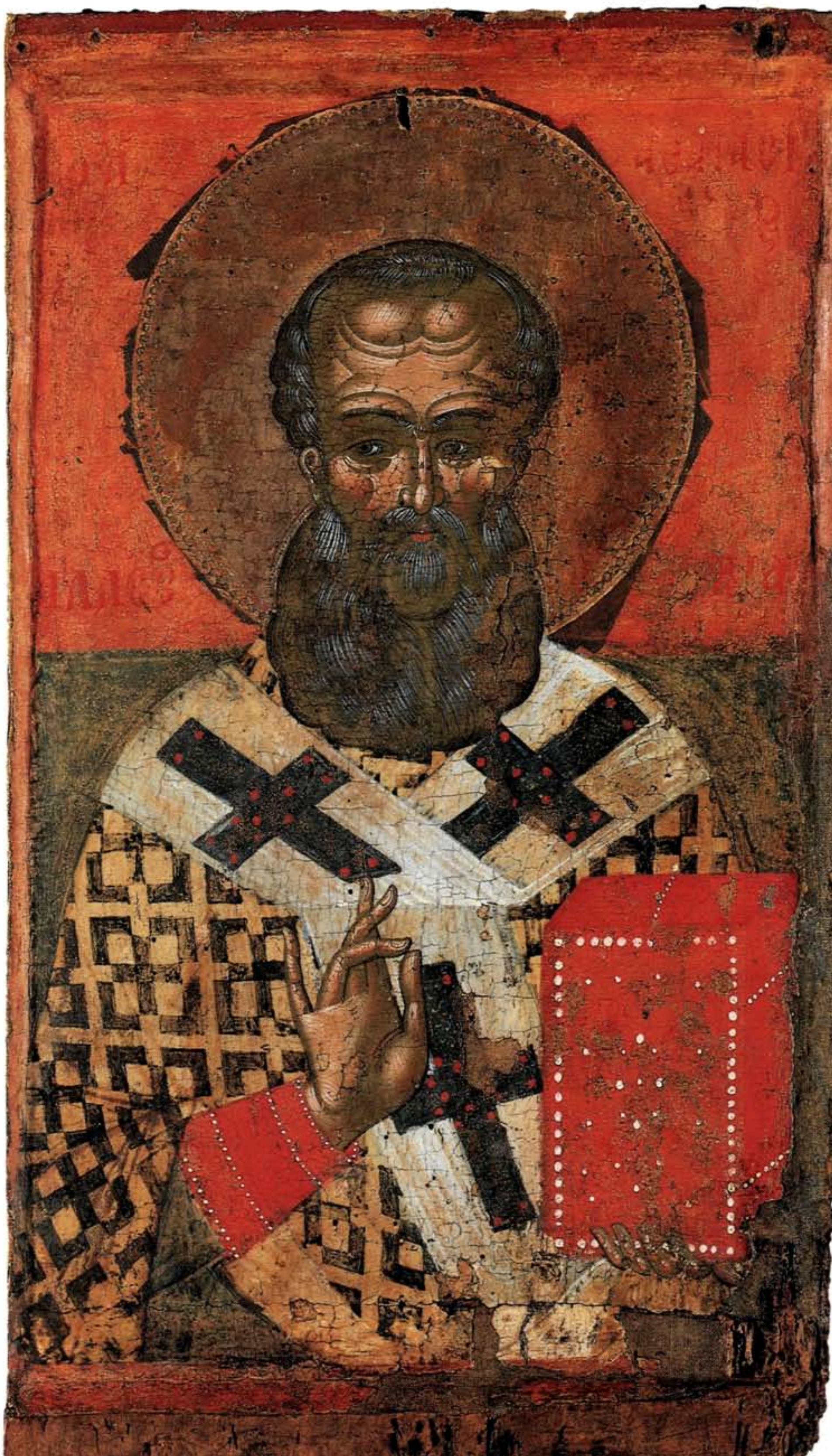
47.5 x 28 x 3.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3670
Provenance: Church of Saint George, Berat
Date: About 1600

The upper part of the icon, down to the shoulders of Saint Athanasios, is covered by a red background. A large gold halo with a double row of discreet embossed ornaments around the edge frames the broad face of the hierarch, carefully modelled with a preference for red tones, and rendered with a square beard, as required by the iconographic type. The use of red also dominates the bottom of the icon, where it is pronounced in the closed gospel book and the decoration of the saint's sleeve, and more discreet in the dots adorning the black crosses of his *omophorion*.

Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΑΘΑΝΑCΙΟC ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΑC ('Saint Athanasios of Alexandria'), who ascended to the patriarchal throne in his birthplace after the First Ecumenical Council (325), was particularly venerated in the area of Epiros and Macedonia.[1] In the present icon, the hand of a competent painter can be detected in the general execution, in the modelling of the face, with its stylised anatomical features rendered with semicircles and triangles and its strong shadows, and in the white brushstrokes that emphasise the face, eyebrows and beard. Clear recollections of the art of a north Greek workshop that was dominant in the area in the late 15th century,[2] and similarities with the art of the painter Onouphrios of Cyprus[3] enable this icon to be dated about 1600.

Unpublished

1. See also cat. no. 6.
2. See cat. no. 5.
3. See cat. no. 20.



26. Saint Athanasios enthroned

84.5 x 47.5 x 4 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3635
Provenance: Berat
Date: First half of the 17th century

The patriarch of Alexandria is depicted enthroned in the icon from Berat, which has several areas of damage to its frame and upper part, especially on the gold ground. The saint raises his right hand in blessing and holds an open book in his left. His dynamic contribution, as deacon, to the First Ecumenical Council, which condemned the heresy of Arius and his contesting of the divine nature of Christ, is emphasised by the inscription: *ΕΝΑ ΘΕΟΝ CΕΒΟΜΕΘΑ ΕΝ ΤΡΙΑΔΙ ΕΝ ΜΟΝΑΔΙ ΜΗΤΕ ΤΑ ΠΡΟCΩΠΑ CΥΝΧΕΟΝΤΕC ΜΗΤΕ ΤΗΝ ΟΥCΙΑΝ* ('We worship one God in Trinity and in Unity, confusing neither the persons nor the substance').

A dotted halo surrounds the figure of the saint, in the well-known iconographic type of the bushy-bearded old man.[1] Dotted circular patterns also adorn the inscription: *Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΑΘΑΝΑCΙΟC* ('Saint Athanasios'). The marble throne reaches to the edges of the icon and gives the impression of a not very successful attempt to adapt a drawn model to the dimensions of this specific work. In the saint's garments, the red *omophorion* with gold crosses, the *phelonion* with its many crosses, and the *epitrachelion* also reveal evident clumsiness in the drawing. At the same time, the red cushion with knots is a recollection of Cretan icons of the 15th and 16th century.

Knowledge of good models, and certain weaknesses of the painter in composition and drawing assign this icon to the first half of the 17th century.

Unpublished

1. See cat. nos. 6, 25.





27. Saint George enthroned

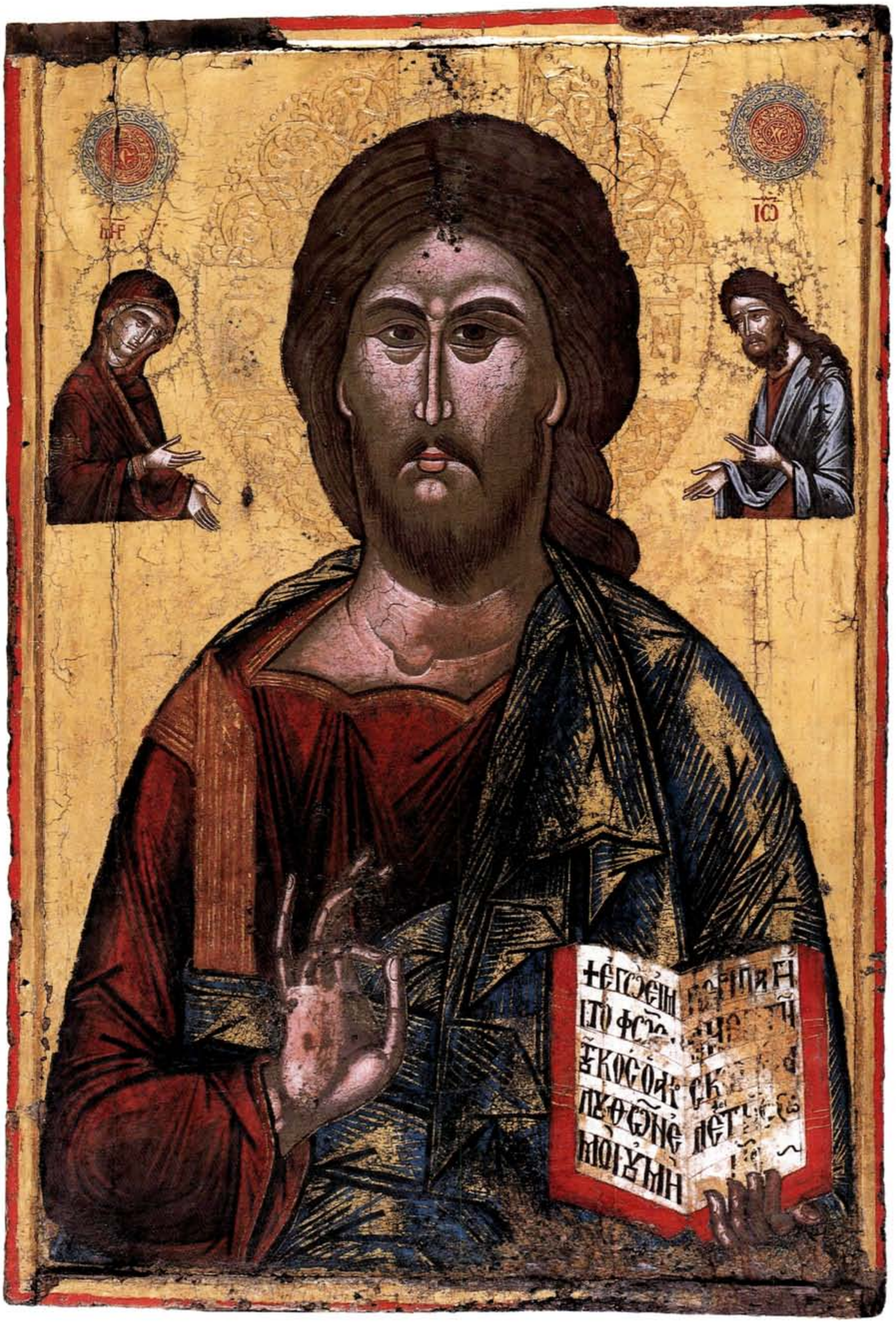
78 x 50.5 x 3.2 cm.
Inv. no. IN 5676
Provenance: Church of Saint Nicholas, village of Boboshticë, Korcë
Date: First half of the 17th century

Saint George, seated on a wooden throne, receives the martyr's crown from Christ, who is depicted on a smaller scale at the top right, holding an open scroll with the inscription: *ΟΡΩ CE ΜΑΡΤΥC ΚΑΙ ΔΗΔΟΜΙ COI CTEΦOC* ('I see you martyr and give you a crown'). The military saint is depicted here wearing the dress of a court official, a decorated chiton and a cloak with a fur lining, and holding in his right hand a rod with knobs at intervals; these features recall the painting of the Kastoria workshop in the late 15th and early 16th century. One typical distinctive dress element associated with the workshop was the depiction of military saints wearing the dress of Byzantine courtiers,[1] a feature adopted by 17th-century painters such as those from Linotopi,[2] or the painters of the icons for the templon in the katholikon of Xenophontos Monastery, in which Saint Demetrios is depicted enthroned and wearing courtly dress.[3] With these icons, which are dated to the early 17th century, are associated the style and colour palette of the icon of Saint George, the fleshy face with raised eyebrows, and the predominant use of red and gold. The movement of the saint's left hand, which holds the edge of his cloak, a recollection of Byzantine models, is found in works of this period and region, such as the wall-paintings of the church of the Virgin of the notable Apostolakis at Kastoria (1605/6).[4]
The ornament on the gold halo, in the form of a winding shoot surrounded by punched dots, is also a characteristic feature of 17th-century Macedonian icons.[5]

Unpublished
1. Garidis 1989, 65, 84, 120.
2. Tourta 1991, 184-185.
3. *Μονή Ξενοφώντος* 1998, fig. 56.
4. Paisidou 2002, 211.
5. *Θησαυροί του Αγίου Όρους* 1997, 158.

28. Christ Pantokrator

109 x 75.8 x 9 cm.
Inv. no. IN 4213
Provenance: Monastery of the Virgin, village of Postenan, Erseke
Date: 1635



Two despotic icons in the Museum of Medieval Art at Korcë come from the iconostasis of the Monastery of the Virgin in the area of Erseke: Christ, which is presented in the exhibition, and John the Baptist,[1] with the date 1635.

Christ, in the type of the Pantokrator, is depicted at half-length holding an open gospel book with the calligraphic majuscule passage: *ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΟ ΦΩC ΤΟΥ ΚΟCΜΟΥ...* ('I am the light of the world') (John 8, 12). At the top, the Virgin and John the Baptist, venerating, are depicted in bust on a smaller scale.

Despite the damage to the icon, the care taken by the painter is evident in the modelling of the figures and garments, which are decorated with dense, linear gold striations.

Certain elements of the decoration, the medallions and the wide gold halo with blossoming tendrils,[2] betray a competent north Greek painter of the early 17th century. On the basis of the stylistic similarities and the identical dimensions of the present icon and the icon of the Baptist in the same monastery, this icon of Christ may safely be dated to 1635.

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Trésors d'art albanais 1993, no. 39.

1. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 38. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, no. 14.
2. See cat. no. 31.

29. Christ enthroned, the Just Judge

93 x 63.8 x 3.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 6283
Provenance: Church of Saint Peter, village of Bezhan, Erseke
Date: 1651

Christ enthroned is depicted as a severe figure, wearing a brown-red *chiton* and blue *himation* enlivened by gold paint. He blesses and holds a gospel book open at the passage from John: *ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΟ ΦΩC ΤΟΥ ΚΟCΜΟΥ...* ('I am the light of the world...') (John 8, 12). The ligatures *IC̃ XC̃* ('Jesus Christ') in medallions and the inscription *Ο ΔΙΚΑΙΟC ΚΡΗΤΗC* ('the Just Judge') in relief panels are projected against the gold ground of the icon, dotted and in relief, with broad leaves and flowers. As the remains of the original decoration indicate, the background was lavishly decorated, although today the original preparation can be seen over the larger part of the icon. This tendency to luxury, complemented by the relief halo, which is also found in other works in the same region, is an indication of the preferences of the donors and also the competence of the creators of portable icons.[1] The wide throne with arches at the bottom is decorated with dense dotted leaves and flowers, of similar inspiration and execution as those on the throne of the Virgin *Κυρίας τῶν Ἀγγέλων* ('Lady of the Angels').[2] In the arches on Christ's throne are two minuscule inscriptions, the left of which is unfortunately damaged. The word *λημοτο...* can be made out in the fifth line, and the following line reads: *τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς μεταμορφώσεως / ἐν μηνὶ Ἰανουαρίῳ 16΄.* ('of the church of the Transfiguration / January 16'). The inscription continues in the right arch of the throne, as follows: *πλησίον τῆς κόμης νικολή/τζας εἰς μνημώσηνων αὐτοῦ / ἀπὸ τὴν ἔνσαρκον εἰκονομείαν τοῦ χ(ριστο)ῦ / 1651 ἀπὸ κτήσεως / κόσμου ἔτος 7159 / ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος)* ('Near the village Nikoli/tsa in commemoration of him / from the Incarnation of Christ / 1651 since the foundation / of the world in the year 7159 / of indiction').

The reference to Nikolitsa (a village near Grammos), and the nearby church of the Transfiguration, and the date January 1651 are also found in an inscription on an icon of the Virgin trascribed by Popa.[3] The icon of the Virgin was found in the church of Saint George at Vithkuk. According to the author's reading, the inscription refers to: *...τὸν μέγιστον ναὸν τῆς Μεταμορφώσεως πλησίον τῆς Νικολίτζας, Ἰωάννου τοῦ Νίτζου τοῦ Γεώργι παπα Στεφάνου εἰς μνημόσηνον αὐτοῦ ἐν ἔτη ἀπὸ κίσεως κόσμου 7159[4] ἐν μηνὶ Ἰανουαρίῳ...* ('the great church of the Transfiguration near Nikolitsa, of Ioannis Nitzos son of Georgios papa Stephanos, in commemoration of him, in the year 7159 since the foundation of the world, in the month of January...').

The icon of the Virgin is unfortunately still unpublished, and we can therefore only note the shared reference in the two inscriptions, dating from the same year, to the church of the Transfiguration, which was near Nikolitsa, and the names of the donors mentioned. Nikolitsa, in the area of Grammos on the borders between Macedonia and Epiros, was the place of origin of competent craftsmen in the 17th century. In 1690, a goldsmith named Nikolaos, from the village of Nikolitza, decorated an icon of the Virgin in the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos.[5] The connection between the craftsman who executed the relief decoration of the icon of Christ and

the goldsmiths of Nikolitsa, however, remains purely conjectural.

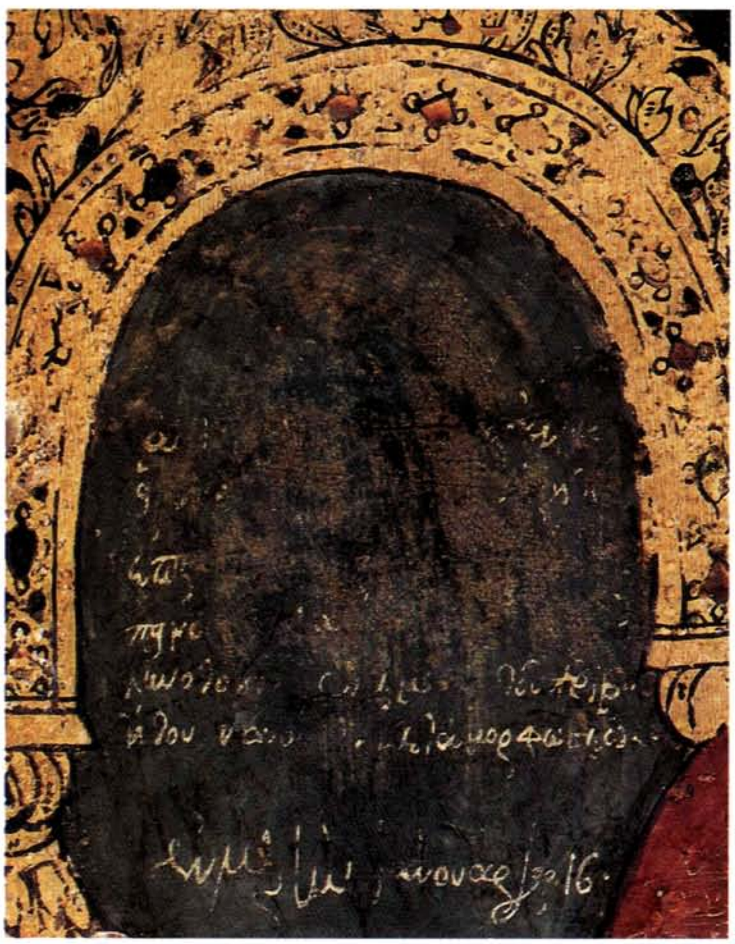
The reference to Linotopi, at the damaged part of the inscription on the icon of Christ, alludes to the probable descent of the painter from the now ruined village in the area of Grammos, near Kastoria. Linotopi, flourished in the 17th and 18th century and the place of origin of well-known painters, whose radius of activity extended from the nearby areas of Macedonia and Epiros as far afield as lake Trichonis, the region of Prilep, Pilio and Palatitsia.[6]

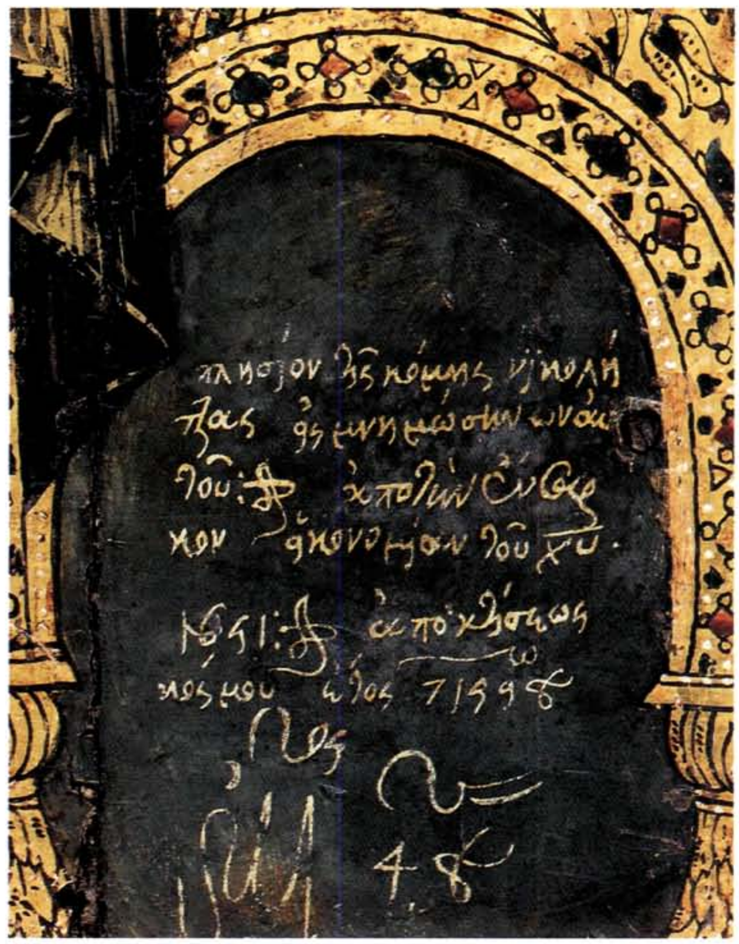
The date of the icon, in 1651, which falls within the chronological termini of the activities of painters from Linotopi, the stylistic features, and the weakness luxury, allow us to associate this icon with the art of the painters from Linotopi in the middle of the 17th century.

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Trésors d'art albanais 1993, no. 36.

1. See cat. no. 31.
2. See cat. no. 30.
3. Popa 1998, no. 310.
4. The author erroneously transcribes the date 7169 from the foundation of the world and gives the date 1661 after the birth of Christ.
5. Ballian 1996, 518.
6. Tourta 1991, esp. 41-45.







30. Virgin enthroned and Child, Lady of the Angels

93 x 52.5 x 3.6 cm.
Inv. no. IN 4025
Provenance: Erseke
Date: Middle of the 17th century

The predominance of gold in this icon of the Virgin enthroned holding the infant Christ, which is only slightly relieved by the red and green on the garments of the angels and the cushions on the throne, suggests the angelic atmosphere appropriate to the: *ΚΥΡΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΓ-ΓΕΛΩΝ* ('Lady of the Angels'), the appellation, according to the inscription on the present icon, of the *ΜΗ(ΤΗ)Ρ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ* ('Mother of God'). This type of the Virgin enthroned, usually seated on a wooden throne, was commonly used down to the 18th century by the Cretan School, in works by the School of Thebes, and also by local Epirote and island workshops. The inscription: *Κυρία τῶν Ἀγγέλων* (Lady of the Angels) is often found, as in the icons from Erseke, but also accompanied other types of the Virgin.[1]

The faces in the present icon are painted as fleshy, with well-drawn features projected against the smooth surface of the flesh. The *maphorion*, draped in a complicated fashion around the Virgin, and the red shoes, which rest on the undulating folds of her dress, recall the Virgin enthroned by the Cretan painter Theophanis in the church of Saint Nicholas Anapafsas at Meteora.[2]

The light figure of the Virgin holding the infant Christ contrasts with the gold throne, heavily adorned with dotted floral decoration, with arches at the bottom and curved backrest. This kind of throne, with double cushions, is also found in an icon of Christ from the same area dated to 1651.[3] The decoration of the icon of the Lady of the Angels is completed by the relief gold haloes with decorative tendrils, an element also to be found in other icons of this period and region.[4]

The precision of the drawing of the fine figures in this icon, and the love for decoration, are attributed to a painter of the middle of the 17th century who has a sound knowledge of painting models and of the means by which to reproduce them well.



Unpublished

1. See Vocotopoulos 1990, 25.
2. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, fig. 271.
3. See cat. no. 29.
4. See cat. no. 31. See also an icon of Saint Prokopios of the early 17th century (Chatzidaki 1997, no. 25).


ΜΡ
ΘΥ
ΙϹ ΧϹ
Η ΚΥΡΙΑ
ΤΩΝ ΑΓΓΕΛΩΝ:

31. Saint John the Baptist

84 x 56.6 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 4116
Provenance: Erseke
Date: Middle of the 17th century

Saint John the Baptist, winged, as *ἐνσώματος ἄγγελος* ('incorporeal angel'), is depicted in the desert, his left hand raised in a gesture of conversation with Christ, who blesses, emerging from the arc of heaven in the top left corner. The wings on the saint's shoulders give material form to the prophecy: *Ἰδού, ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὅς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου* ('Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee') (Luke 7, 27, Malachi 3, 1). The holy dialogue between the decapitated saint and the Saviour can be followed through the texts of the inscriptions in the icon. The Baptists addresses to the Lord the words of the epigram: *ΟΡΑC ΟΙΑ ΠΑCΧΟΥCΙΝ Ω ΘΕΟΥ ΛΟΓΕ. ΟΙ ΠΤΑΙCΜΑΤΩΝ ΕΛΕΓΧΟΙ ΤΩΝ ΒΛΕΛΥΚΤΕΩΝ, ΕΛΕΓΧΟΝ Κ(ΑΙ) ΓΑΡ ΜΗ ΦΕΡΩΝ Ο ΗΡΩΔΗC, ΤΕΤΜΗΚΕΝ ΙΔΟΥ ΤΗΝ ΕΜΗΝ ΚΑΡΑΝ C(ΩΤ)ΕΡ* ('You see, O Word of God, what they suffer who reprove sins. For Herod could not bear my reproof and, behold, he cut off my head, O Saviour'), written on the open scroll he holds, along with the staff topped by a cross, in his right hand. Christ crowns him, answering: *ΟΡΩ CΕ ΜΑΡΤΥ ΚΑΙ CΤΕΦΩ CΟΥ ΤΗΝ ΚΑΡΑ* ('I see you martyr and I place a crown on your head'), according to the inscription next to the saint's halo. At the bottom left, in the stones of the desert, John's severed head is depicted in the gold bowl of the miraculous Third Discovery[1], and at the right, stuck in the tree, is the axe, symbolising the words of the prophet, according to the inscription: *ΙΔΟΥ ΚΑΙ Η ΑΞΙΝΗ ΠΡΟC ΤΗΝ ΡΙΖΑΝ ΤΟΥ ΔΕΝΔΡΟΥ ΚΕΙΤΑΙ* ('And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the tree') (Matthew 3, 10).



The dark figure of the saint, wild-faced and leam, wearing the sheepskin (*melote*) next to his skin and a dark blue *himation*, is projected against the decorated with floral decorative motifs gold background of the icon. The linear treatment and harsh drapery point to a date for the icon in the middle of the 17th century. A trend is found at the same period to use relief floral decorative motifs, presumably a cheap imitation of luxury sheathing. Similar background decoration, for example, is found in an icon of Christ dated to 1651 from the same region of Erseke,[2] and in an icon of the Virgin *Vimatarissa* in the Vatopedi Monastery, dated 1690.[3] Although this kind of decoration is found in both earlier and later icons[4] and has been connected with 16th-century icons from Romania,[5] it seems that in the general area of Epiros, in particular, from where the present icon comes, it satisfied both the aesthetic demands of those who commissioned the icons and reflected the high level of craftsmanship of the painters and goldsmiths of the period.

Unpublished

1. Chatzidakis 1988, 88-97.
2. See cat. no. 29.
3. Ballian 1996, 518.
4. See cat. nos. 40-43.
5. Chatzidaki 1997, 256. See Drandaki 2002, 250-252.



32. Christ enthroned the *Fearful Judge*

75 x 49 x 3.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3531
Provenance: Church of Saint Nicholas, Dhrovjan
Date: 1657
Painter: Ioannis Skoutaris

Christ *the Fearful Judge*, depicted enthroned, in a formal, frontal stance, with the inscription: *Ο ΩΝ* ('the Being') on his halo, blesses with his right hand and in his left holds an open gospel resting on his leg, with the passage from John: *ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΟ ΦΩC ΤΟΥ ΚΟCΜΟΥ* ('I am the light of the world') (John 8, 12).

The gold throne, the two cushions on the seat and one on the footstool are a recollection of good models. The meticulous execution of the figure and garments of Christ, despite the linear treatment and the decoration on the frame of the icon, betray the art of a well-trained painter and competent craftsman. He is Ioannis Skoutaris, who signs at the bottom of the icon, to the right of the footstool: *ΧΕΙΡ Ι(ΩΑΝΝΗ) CΚΟΥΤΑΡΙ* ('the hand of Ioannis Skoutaris') and to the left: *ΕΤΟΥC ΑΧΝΖ* (1657) ('in the year 1657'). The characteristic features of his art link the painter of the present icon with Ioannis Skoutaris from the village of Grammosta, modern Grammos, near Kastoria, which was the birthplace of painters from the first decades of the 16th century. Grammosta was the place of origin of another fine painter, Ioannis, son of papa-Theodoros, a contemporary of Onouphrios,[1] who was also active in the first decades of the 16th century.[2] Ioannis's career is associated with the period of Prochoros, archbishop of Ohrid,[3] and the wealthy Serb notable Dimitar Pepik.[4] In the middle of the 17th century, when there were many painters from settlements in north-west Macedonia, who worked in the towns of the region and travelled as far as Mount Athos,[5] we encounter several painters from Grammosta who are known by their Christian names, like the colleagues Georgios, Dimitrios and Ioannis, who executed wall-paintings in churches and monasteries at villages in Epiros and who were usually organised in family guilds.[6] Later, in the first decades of the 18th century, one Eustathios from Grammosta painted at Pisoderi, near Florina.[7]

It is to this tradition of painters from Grammosta, with the anti-classical, often simplistic character that goes hand in hand with the craftsmanship and meticulous execution of their work, that the work of the painter of the present icon, Ioannis Skoutaris, is to be assigned. In 1645 he worked with his father, Dimitrios, on the wall-paintings of the church of the Holy Apostles in the village of Molyvdoskepastos near Konitsa, where they signed: *χεὶρ ἐμοῦ τοῦ ταπεινοῦ Δημητρίου ἐκ χωρίου Γράμμοστη καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκούταρη* ('the hand of myself, the humble Dimitrios from the village of Grammosta and of his son, Ioannis Skoutaris').[8] About ten years later, in 1657, the painter alone signed the icon of Christ which is distinguished by its technical perfection.

Unpublished

1. See cat. no. 11.
2. Mašnić 1995-1996.
3. Grozdanov 1990.
4. See Drakopoulou 2002, 108.
5. Chatzidakis 1987, 96-97.
6. Chatzidakis 1987, under the entries Georgios (18), Ioannis (28), Dimitrios (15), Dimitrios (12), with earlier bibliography.
7. See Chatzidakis 1987, entry for Eustathios (8).
8. Vocotopoulos 1986, 310. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, entry for Skoutaris Ioannis (1). Karamberidi 2003, 292-294, 305.



33. Part of an epistyle with the Akathistos Hymn

255 x 30 x 4 cm.
Inv. no. IN 4171
Provenance: Monastery of the Virgin, village of Postenan, Erseke
Date: Middle of the 17th century

The Akathistos Hymn is one of the finest and most popular Byzantine hymns, and its twenty-four stanzas ('houses'), which form an acrostic with the letters of the alphabet, are sung during the liturgy of the Lauds, during Lent. The hymn is indissolubly linked with the rescue of Constantinople from the Avar siege in 626, and is more generally associated in the historical consciousness of Orthodox Christians with moments of danger to the people, that were averted thanks to the intervention of the Virgin. This is possibly also the explanation for the wide dissemination of the iconographic cycle in Orthodox churches in the Balkans during the period of Ottoman rule.

In the iconography[1] the first twelve stanzas refer to events from the Annunciation to the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, while the rest have a laudatory character, with encomiums of the persons of the Virgin and Christ.

Eight scenes are preserved on the epistyle fragment from the monastery of the Virgin at Erseke, illustrating eight stanzas, from the seventh (H) to the fourteenth (Ξ). The seventh stanza, with the inscription: *ΗΚΟΥCΑΝ ΕΙ ΠΙΜΕΝΕC ΤΟΝ ΑΓΓΕΛΟΝ* (*Ἤκουσαν οἱ ποιμένες τῶν ἀγγέλων ὑμνούντων τὴν ἔνσαρκον Χριστοῦ παρουσίαν...* ('The shepherds heard the Angels extolling the presence of Christ in the flesh...') is illustrated by the scene of the Nativity. The Virgin relaxes, partly reclining on a litter, Joseph sits lost in reflection outside the cave, angels appear on high at the left, and four shepherds with their flock approach to worship the newborn child.

In the eighth stanza, which has the inscription: *ΘΕΩΔΡΟΜΟΝ ΑCΤΕΡΑ ΘΕΟΡΟΝΤΕC Ι ΜΑΓΙ* (*Θεοδρόμον ἀστέρα θεωρήσαντες μάγοι, τῇ τούτου ἠκολούθησαν αἴγλῃ...*) ('The Magi, having seen the Star leading to God, followed its radiance...'), the three Wise Men, on horseback, look, not at the star of the Nativity, but at an angel wearing red garments who descends from heaven on a red horse. The subject of the angel on horseback, guiding the Wise Men, which has been considered an invention of Serbian art in the Palaeologan period,[2] is found in the 16th and above all the 17th century in north Greek wall-paintings, as in the chapel of the Three Hierarchs in the Varlaam Monastery, in the Makryalexis Monastery at Ioannina, in the church of Saint Zacharias at Grammos, and in three churches in Kastoria, the Virgin Apostolaki, the Virgin in the neighbourhood of Mouzeviki, and the exonarthex of the church of the Virgin Koumbelidiki.[3]

The ninth stanza: *ΙΔΟΝ ΠΕΔΕC ΧΑΛΔΕΟΝ* (*Εἶδον παῖδες Χαλδαίων...*) ('The sons of the Chaldaens saw...') is illustrated with the Adoration of the Magi. The painter of the present icon has preferred the version of the Adoration of the Magi in the house,[4] a version also found in churches of the same period in Kastoria.

The tenth stanza: *ΚΥΡΙΚΕC ΘΕΩΦΟΡΙ* (*Κήρυκες Θεοφόροι γεγονότες μάγοι...*) ('Having become God-bearing heralds, the Magi...') depicts the entry of the Magi into Babylon. At the gate of the walled city –the Virgin and Christ are depicted high up in the walls– the Magi meet the citizens of Babylon to announce Christ's birth to them.

In the eleventh stanza: *ΛΑΜΨΑC ΕΝ ΤΗ ΕΓΙΠΤΟ* (*Λάμψας ἐν τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ φωτισμὸν ἀληθείας...*) ('Having shed the light of truth in Egypte...'), the representation is of the Flight into Egypt. In ac-



cordance with the Palaeologan iconographic tradition, a woman wearing a crown, the personification of Egypt, emerges on the walls, welcoming the Saviour, while a black-skinned daemon, symbolising idols, is thrown down from the battlements. The pack-animal carrying the Virgin and Christ is led by Jacob, holding the reigns, while Joseph follows on foot with his staff over his shoulder, carrying clothing.

The scene of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple illustrates the twelfth stanza: *ΜΕΛΟΝΤΟ CIMEON (Μέλλοντος Συμεῶνος τοῦ παρόντος αἰῶνος...)* ('Symeon, prepared to leave this age...'). This stanza brings to a close the narrative part of the Akathistos Hymn, after which the encomiastic section begins, with symbolical doctrinal references and iconographic innovations. On the epistyle in the Korcë Museum, only two scenes from the twelve stanzas of the second part are preserved: the thirteenth stanza: *ΝΕΑΝ ΕΔΙΞΕΝ ΚΤΙCΙΝ (Νέαν ἔδειξεν κτίσιν ἐμφανίσας ὁ κτίστης ἡμῖν τοῖς ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ γενομένοις, ἐξ ἀσπόρου βλαστήσας γαστρός...)* ('The Creator revealed a new creation when He presented Himself to us, who were made by Him...'), in which Christ emerges half-length and blesses a group of apostles and hierarchs, and the fourteenth: *ΞΕΝΟΝ ΤΟΚΟΝ ΙΔΟΝΤΕC (Ξένον τόκον ἰδόντες, ξενωθῶμεν τοῦ κόσμου...)* ('Having seen this strange birth, let us estrange ourselves from this world...'), in which the Virgin enthroned, holding the Child, is depicted amongst men and women saints.

The above eight scenes on the epistyle are separated by twisted colonnettes with capitals, decorated with gold red and blue paint.

A fragment of the same work in the Korcë Museum was published in an earlier catalogue of icons from Albania; it illustrates the eighteenth stanza: *Σῶσαι θέλων τὸν κόσμον...* ('Wishing to save the world...'), with a version of the *Anastasis*.[5]

The entire composition of the Akathistos Hymn is characterised by a gentle, rather monotonous palette in earth tones, by the positive presence of the natural and architectural landscape, and by delicate figures, rendered with a certain simplification. These are features associated with the art of painters from the villages of Epiros and Macedonia in the 17th century, especially with works by painters from Grammosta, modern Grammos, near Kastoria.[6] The subject of the Akathistos Hymn, which is not very common, was probably chosen because the monastery was dedicated to the Virgin, and also against the background of the revival of the Akathistos cycle during the period of Ottoman rule, as, for example in the Makryalexis Monastery (1599), in the Monastery of the Transfiguration at Dryovouno, Kozani (1652),[7] and in churches at Kastoria at this same period.[8]

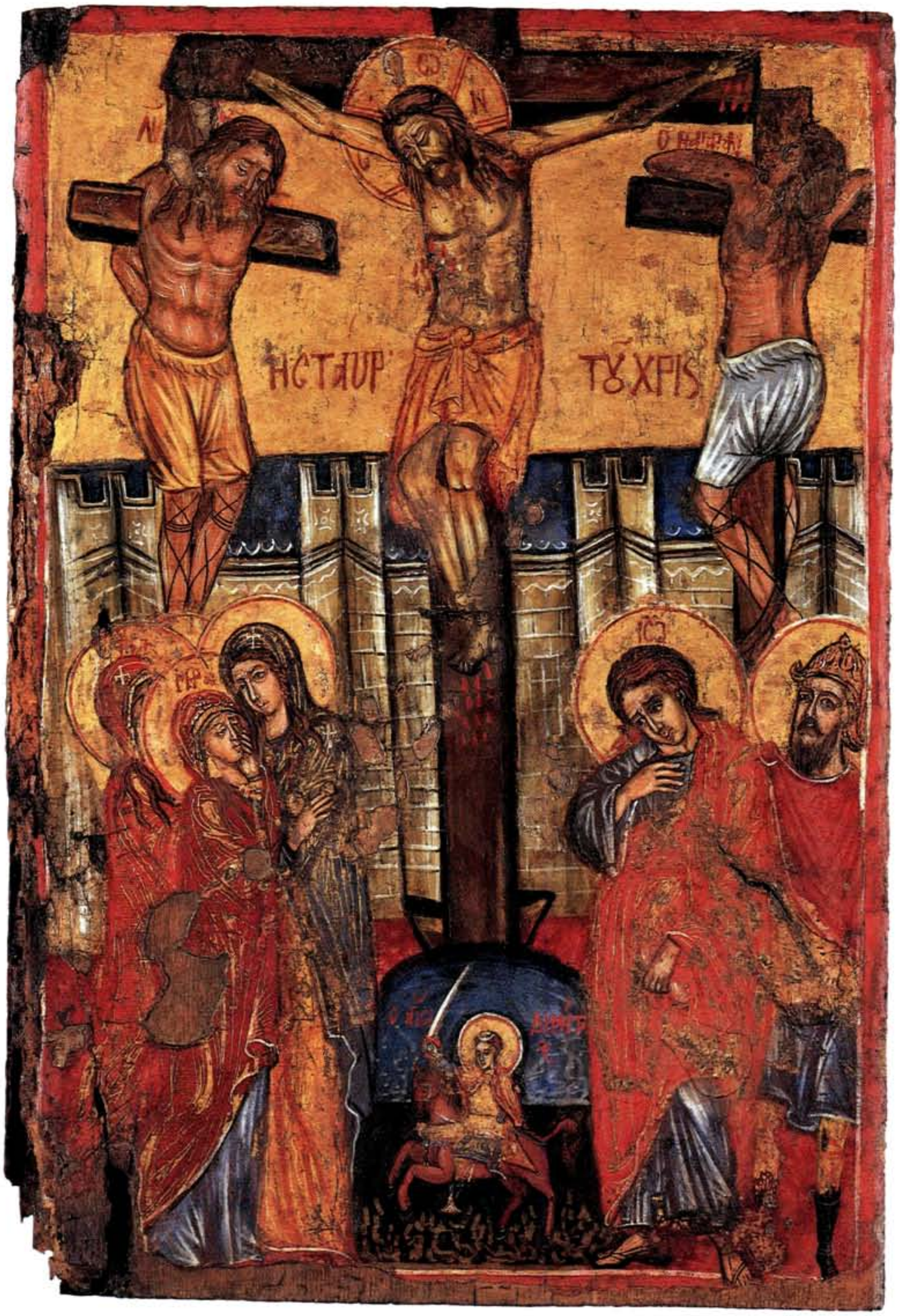
Unpublished

1. For an extensive, well-documented analysis of the iconographic subject of the Akathistos Hymn, mainly in portable icons, with a full bibliography, see Chatzidaki 1997, 150-165. See also Aspra-Vardavaki 1992.
2. See Xyngopoulos 1957b, 122-123. Garidis 1972, 23ff. Gabelić 1977, 58.
3. See Paisidou 2002, 133-134. See also Tourta 1991, 194.
4. For the two different traditions on the adoration of the Magi see Aspra-Vardavaki 1992, 63-64.
5. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 37.
6. See cat. no. 32.
7. Tourta 1991, 194, 203.
8. See note 3.









34. Crucifixion

53 x 37 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3663
Provenance: Church of the Virgin, Berat
Date: Late 17th century

The walls of Jerusalem rise in front of the blue ground and clearly define the two parts of the icon of the Crucifixion. At the top, against a gold background, is Christ on the Cross, with the good robber, dead, at the right, and the other robber with his chest bound to the cross. The main figures of the Crucifixion are depicted in the bottom part of the icon. At the left is the small band of women, the main figure of which is the Virgin, who laments, and at the right Christ's favourite disciple and a Roman soldier.

Saint Demetrios is depicted on horseback, on a small scale, in a border beneath the cross. The representation is presumably connected with the patron saint of the donor of the icon.

The folkloric naivety of the painting is combined with reminiscences of good models, which can be seen in the long hair of the figures, the postures of the robbers, the noble figure of John, and an endeavour to render volume –elements that date the icon to the late 17th century.

Unpublished

35. Saint Naum

98 x 57 x 4.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3822
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation to the Virgin, Tiranë
Date: 18th century

Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΝΑΟΥΜ ὁ ἐν Βουλγαρίᾳ ('Saint Naum of Bulgaria'), one of the best-known disciples of Cyril and Methodius, who converted the Slavs to Christianity in the middle of the 9th century, followed his teachers to: *ὅλας τὰς πόλεις τῆς Βουλγαρίας* ('all the towns of Bulgaria'), proclaiming: *τὸν λόγον τῆς εὐσεβείας, τυπτόμενος, λοιδορούμενος, θλιβόμενος καὶ διωγμοὺς καὶ μάστιγας ὑπομένων ὑπὸ τῶν ἀπίστων καὶ ἐχθρῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ* ('the word of piety, being smitten, reviled, and distressed and suffering persecution and flagellation at the hands of the unfaithful and enemies of Christ').[1] His work of Christian teaching is also emphasised by the text on the scroll in this icon: *ΟC Δ ΑΝ ΠΟΙΗCΗ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΔΑΞΗ ΟΥΤΟC ΜΕΓΑC ΚΛΗΘΗCΕΤΑΙ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΒΑCΙΛΕΙΑ ΤΩΝ οὐρανῶν* ('Whoever acts and teaches, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven').

The depiction of the saint[2] full length at a mature age, with a long beard and monk's garb, is accompanied by two representations on a small scale at the bottom of the icon. At the right is a depiction of the katholikon of the monastery founded by the saint on lake Ohrid. The monastery of Hosios Naum was the centre of his veneration in the general area of Macedonia. At the left is a scene of his miracles, with the inscription: *ΖΕΥΓΗ ΤΗΝ ΑΡΚΟΥΔΑ ΕΙC ΤΟ ΑΜΑΞΗ* ('He yokes the bear to the cart'). The saint worked miracles throughout his life and his travels in the north Balkans to spread Christian teaching, and also during his stay in Rome to secure the approval of Pope Hadrian for the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the Slavonic language.[3] The miracle of yoking the bear to the cart, worked by



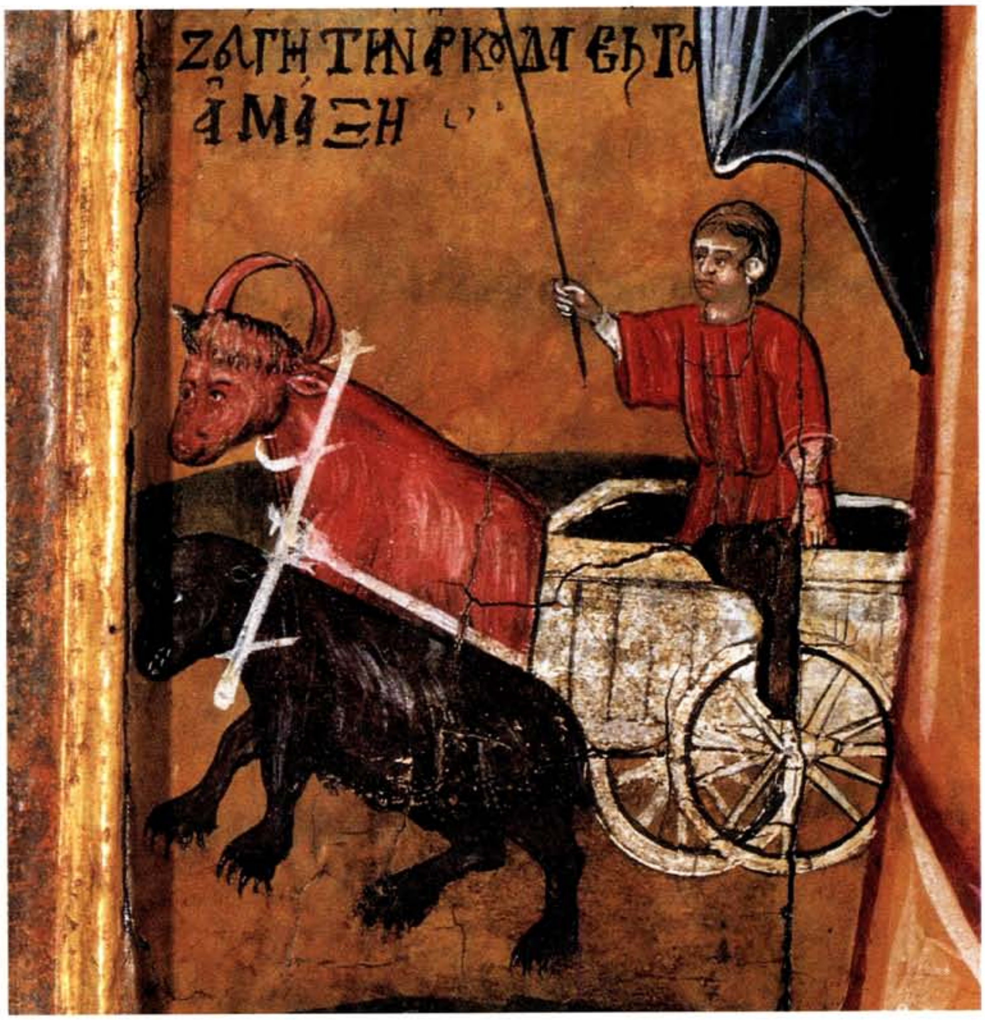
the saint "when he was persecuted by the Bogomils" is nowhere mentioned in the *synaxaria*, and is found only in the life printed at Voskopojë in 1730.[4] The same scene is included in engravings by Christophor Zefarović with representations of the miracles of Saint Naum, which were printed in Vienna, and in the copperplate engraving of the Greek church of Budapest, executed in 1743 at the expense of Naum Bikera, the merchant from Voskopojë.[5]

The name of the donor of the icon from the church of the Annunciation in Tiranë, according to the inscription: *ΔΕΗCΕΙC ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΓΡΟΔΑΝ* ('Supplication of the servant of God, Grodan'), points to Slav origins, but the inscriptions are written in good Greek.

The lively colours, the strong white on the preparation and the trend towards a naturalistic rendering of some of the facial features, in the eyelids, eyebrows and hair, assign the icon to the 18th century.

Unpublished

1. Doukakis 1954, 477-479.
2. For depictions of Saint Naum see cat. no. 61.
3. Doukakis, op. cit.
4. *Ακολουθία αγίου Ναούμ*, *BHG*, II, no. 1317.
5. Papastratou 1986, 269-279.



36. Christ Pantokrator

75 x 50.3 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 4301
Provenance: Bontritsa, Gjirokastër
Date: 18th century

In this icon, with its fine silver decoration, Christ is depicted half-length in the type of the Pantokrator, with a gospel book open at the passage from John: *ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΟ ΦΩC ΤΟΥ ΚΟCΜΟΥ...* ('I am the light of the world...') (John 8, 12).

The distinctly linear rendering of the facial features and clothing is accompanied by a decorative intent in the gold striations on the Pantokrator's red *himation*, and above all in the relief silver background of the icon, elements that date it to the 18th century. This kind of decoration, a reminiscence of Byzantine models, is associated as early as the 16th century with icons of Romania.[1] The same relief decoration as in the present icon is found in an icon of Christ in the Museum of Folk Art in Bucharest, with the date 1750.[2]

Unpublished

1. See cat. no. 31.
2. Nicolescu 1976, no. 35, fig. 75.


IC
XC

37. Virgin enthroned and Child

88 x 57.8 x 2.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 1443
Provenance: Village of Sinicë, Korcë
Date: 1668/9
Painter: Dimitrios, son of papa-Ilias

The art of competent craftsmen from the villages of Epiros and Macedonia in the 17th century, with reminiscences of good models in their simplistic painting, can be seen in the icon of the Virgin enthroned, holding the Child on her left, from Sinicë.

Elements indicative of the care and competence in the decoration include the well-worked frame, which is a continuation of the gold ground, the gilded wooden throne, and the decorated circles with the ligatures: *M(HTH)P Θ(EO)Y* and *I(HΣOY)C X(PICTO)C* ('Mother of God' and 'Jesus Christ').

The reproduction of the Virgin enthroned turned towards Christ, a type common in Post-Byzantine painting, is executed with a certain clumsiness in the rendering of the seated figure, who appears to sink into the deep throne, on the seat of which the double cushions can just be made out. The painter, who does not shun linearity and a simplistic modelling of the figures, persists in decorating the garments and adorns Christ's *chiton* and the Virgin's *maphorion* with gold striations.

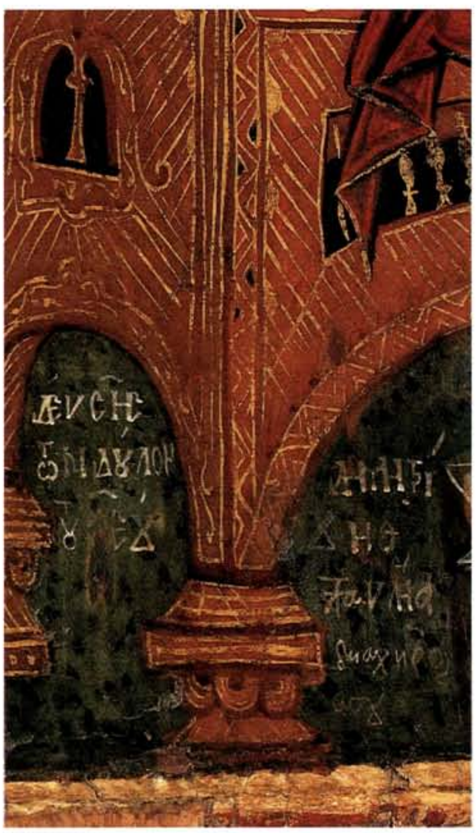
On the bottom part of the throne, the votive inscription and date are written with white lettering against the green ground, in three parts. The first part of the inscription is written on the arch at the side, and it continues in the central opening, to the right and left of the footstool of the Virgin's throne:

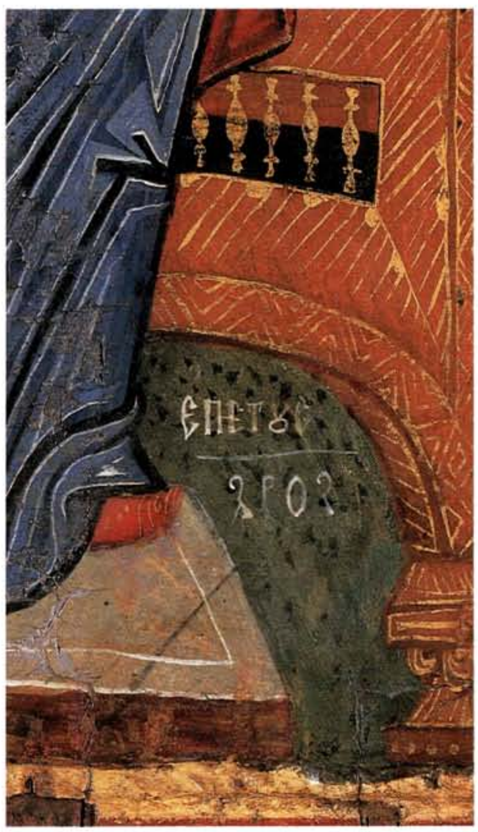
ΔEYCHC / TΩN ΔOYΛOv / TOY ΘEOY ΔHMHTPI/OY HO(C) / παπα YΛHA / δηα χηρος αυτου EΠ ETOYC / *ZPOZ*

(Δέησις τῶν δούλων τοῦ Θεοῦ Δημητρίου υἱοῦ παπα-Ἠλία διὰ χειρὸς αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ ἔτους ZPOZ).

('Prayer of the servant of God Dimitrios, son of the priest Ilias, by his hand in the year 1668').

According to the incorrectly spelled inscription, Dimitrios, son of papa-Ilias, dedicated and signed the icon in the year 7177 from the foundation of the world, which corresponds with 1668/9 after the birth of Christ. The painter probably belonged to a family guild of painters from the villages of Epiros and Macedonia, who were known by their first names. His art recalls works by painters from Grammosta, a village near Kastoria, who decorated a large number of churches in the general area of Epiros during the 17th century.[1]





Unpublished

1. See cat. no. 32.



38. Saint John the Baptist

78.5 x 47.2 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 2106
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation to the Virgin, Vithkuq, Korcë
Date: 1685

This austere icon of the Baptist is painted in the manner of north Greek art. The combination of elements, which suggests a date for the icon, and the barely legible painter's signature, are of particular interest.

The saint is depicted with wings, symbolising his quality as an angel, in accordance with the prophets (Malachi 3, 1), holding his severed head and an open scroll with the well known passage: *Μετανοεῖτε ἤγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν ουρανῶν* ('Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'), which continues with an extract from the apocryphal gospels: *ΟΡΟC ΘΕΟΥ ΤΙΝ ΜΑΝΙΑΝ ΗΡΩΔΟΥ* ('You see, God, the frenzy of Herod').[1] The icon can be dated precisely on the basis of evidence derived from the church of the Annunciation at Vithkuk, Korcë, from which the present icon also comes. A votive inscription on the templon in the church mentions the date *ΑΧΠΔ* ('1684'), while an icon of the Virgin executed in the same art as the present icon of the Baptist, according to the Albanian scholar Theofan Popa, bears the inscription: *ἐπὴ ἔτους ἀπὸ τις ἐνσάρκου ἠκονομήας Χριστοῦ ΑΧΠΕ* ('in the year from the incarnation of Christ 1685').[2]

At the bottom of the icon, in the same lettering as that on the scroll held by the Baptist, is the inscription:

ΔΥΑ ΧΥΡΟC [5-6] *ΔΑCΚΑΛΟC ΚΟΝCΤΑΝΤΥΝΟΥ (ι)ερο(μονα)χος (Διὰ χειρὸς* [5-6] *δάσκαλος Κωνσταντίνου (ἱ)ερο(μόνα)χος)* ('By the hand of the teacher Konstantinos the hieromonk').

The damage to the icon at the point where the name of the painter was probably written creates difficulties for the interpretation of his signature. Was he a hieromonk, the son of one Konstantinos, who signs as *teacher* of the art of painting? Or was he the teacher of the well-known painter of the late 17th-early 18th century, Konstantinos the hieromonk, who collaborated with David from Selenitza?

I am unaware of any instance in Post-Byzantine painting where a painter signs himself as the teacher of someone else. If this is in fact the case here, the pupil must already have been a well-known painter at the time. An interpretation that would identify the painter of the icons from the church of the Annunciation at Vithkuk in the year 1685 with the teacher of the hieromonk Konstantinos in the art of painting[3] cannot be properly documented, though Konstantinos is known to have been a mature painter already in 1693, when he signs the fine





The church of the Annunciation at Vithkuk.



icons in the Tiranë Museum.[4] Furthermore, the thirty-three years of his activity known to us (1693-1726) are consistent with him being a well-known painter in 1685, at an age of possibly just over twenty.

It is also possible that the syntax of the inscription is incorrect, and that the well-known painter Konstantinos the hieromonk himself signs the icon, although the art does not reflect his style. Irrespective of the identity of the painter of the icon, the austere, sorrowing expression of the decapitated saint and the linear treatment of the sheepskin (*melote*) and *chiton* are combined in it with the lavish decoration around the edges and the silver haloes around the face and severed head. Both the decoration around the edges and the wide relief border of the haloes, with silver blossoming tendrils, are common in 17th and 18th century icons from Macedonia, especially from Mount Athos.[5]

Unpublished

1. Protoevangelion of James 43, 14.
2. Popa 1998, 161-162.
3. See cat. no. 40.
4. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, no. 23.
5. Kissas 1991, 190-191. *Μονή Ξενοφώντος* 1998, nos. 58, 66, 72. *Μονή Παντοκράτορος* 1998, figs. 107, 125, 145. *Μονή Αγίου Παύλου* 1998, figs. 51, 82, 83, 104. *Σιμωνόπετρα* 1991, figs. 121, 122. see also cat. no. 31.

39. The Archangel Michael

47 x 34.5 x 2.8 cm.
Inv. no. IN 6720
Provenance: Monastery of the Virgin, Ardenicë
Date: 1690

This small icon from the Ardenicë Monastery continues the Byzantine tradition of depicting the archangel Michael in his protective capacity as guardian in small icons and amulets. Silver and vermilion, in a beautiful, unusual design at the edges, adorn this amuletic icon of the archangel, who holds a sword in his raised hand and a globe with an apotropaic cross.





Ο ΑΡΧΩΝ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ('the Archangel Michael') is depicted full-length wearing military uniform and with large, widely spread wings. The globe, the symbol of authority, in his left hand, with the inscriptions: *Ι(ΗCΟΥ)C Χ(ΡΙCΤΟ)C ΝΙΚΑ* and *Φ(ΑΙΝΕΙ) Φ(ΩC) ΧΡΙCΤΟC* ('Jesus Christ Conquers' and 'The light of Christ shines'), is found with the depiction of the archangel as a warrior in icons in the general area of north-west Greece from the 14th century onwards.

The icon was dedicated by the believer Georgios Dotzosis and his son, Theodoros, with the contribution of the hieromonk Symeon,[1] abbot of the well-known monastery of Ardenicë in south



The katholikon of the Monastery of the Virgin, Ardenicë .

Albania,[2] according to the majuscule inscription (which has no pretensions to correct spelling), written in two parts on the green ground of the icon: *ΔΕΗCIC / ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ / Θ(ΕΟ)Υ ΓΕΟΡΓΗΟΥ / ΔΟΤΖΟ/CH Κ(ΑΙ) ΤΕΚ/ΟΝ ΑΥΤΟ ΘΩδο[ΡΟΥ] ΔΗΑ CHNΔΡΟ/MHC ΤΟΥ / ΑΓΗΟΥ ΚΑΤ/ΗΓΟΥ-ΜΕΝΟΥ / Κ(ΥΡΙΟ)Υ Κ(ΥΡΙΟ)Υ CEMHON / ΗΕΡΕΩ-ΜΟΝΑ[ΧΟΥ] / [Τ]ΗΣ ΑΡΔΕΝΙΤΖΑC* *(Δέησις δούλου τοῦ Θ(εο)ῦ Γεωργίου Δοτζόση κ(αὶ) τέκνου αὐτοῦ Θοδώρου διὰ συνδρομῆς τοῦ ἁγίου καθηγουμένου κ(υρίο)υ κ(υρίο)υ Συμεὼν ἱερομονάχου τῆς Ἀρδενίτζας).* ('The prayer of the servant of God Georgios Dotzosis and his son Thodoros through the contribution of the holy abbot master Symeon, hieromonk of Ardenicë').

According to the date *ΑΧϟ* from the birth of Christ, noted in the bottom part of the left section of the inscription, the icon, which exudes the spontaneity and folkloric good taste of its painter, is dated to 1690.

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Trésors d'art albanais 1993, no. 45.

1. The abbot Symeon has been identified erroneously with the painter of the icon (*Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 45).
2. See Kamaroulias 1996, 576-579.



40. Christ Pantokrator

97 x 63.8 x 6 cm.
Inv. no. 7488
Provenance: Monastery of the Virgin, Lenga, Pogradec
Date: 1694
Painter: Konstantinos the hieromonk

The representation of Christ enthroned with the relief inscription *Ο ΩΝ* ('the Being') on his halo, one of the earliest known works by the painter Konstantinos, is impressive for the abundance of gold and the way in which it was used by the painter to decorate of the frame, the background of the icon and the throne, as well as the gold-painted garments worn by Christ.

The dense gilded relief decoration of the background, consisting of interlocking guilloches with palmettes, and the relief halo, features also found in other icons by the same painter, have been associated with icons from Romania[1] and were preferred by painters from north Greece in the 17th and 18th century.[2] In the 18th century in particular, it appears that this kind of decoration reflects the general climate of donors' economic prosperity and the prevailing decorative intent of baroque.

This decorative intent, which pervades the work, is expressed in the flammiform flowers on the backrest of the throne, the double lavishly decorated cushions, the decoration of the *imation*, the fringes of Christ's chiton, embroidered with flowers, and also the ground and the footstool. Christ's gospel book, also decorated with gold ornaments, is open at the passage from Matthew: *Μάθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ ὅτι πρᾷός εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ εὑρήσετε ἀνάπαυσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν· ὁ γὰρ ζυγός μου χρηστὸς καὶ τὸ φορτίον μου ἐλαφρόν ἐστιν* ('learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light') (Matthew 11, 29-30).

Only a small strip of green ground at the bottom of the throne has been left without decoration, presumably to write the inscription, with gold lettering, in which the decorative intent can be discerned, particularly in the letter omega, which recalls the highly embellished script of Byzantine. The inscription: *ΧΕΙΡ ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ [ΙΕΡΟΜΟΝΑΧΟΥ] [....] CΗΝΔΡΩΜΗ Κ(ΑΙ) ΠΟΘΟΥ ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΥ ΙΕΡΕΟC Κ(ΑΙ) ΕΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΥ [...] ΑΠΟ [...] Χ(ΡΙCΤ)ΟΥ ΑΧϟΔ* ('The hand of Konstantinos, hieromonk, through the contribution and desire of Nikolaos, priest and oiconomos, from the birth of Christ 1694') is written in three parts around Christ's legs, and is unfortunately damaged at several points. In the preserved section of the inscription, in addition to the painter's signature and the date 1694, we read that the icon of Christ is a dedication by the priest Nikolaos, who was also *economos*, presumably at the monastery from which the icon comes. The office of *economos*, who was responsible for financial matters, was very important in coenobitic monasteries.[3]

The hieromonk Konstantinos, who usually signs *χεὶρ Κωνσταντίνου ἱερομονάχου* ('The hand of Konstantinos hieromonk'), seems to have specialised in portable icons, more than fifty of which have been found in the area of Albania (Korcë, Elbasan, Vithkuk, Voskopojë), west Macedonia (Kastoria, Veria), Mount Athos and the archdiocese of Ohrid, dating from 1693 to 1726.[4]

Features such as the light-coloured flesh, in this case with a little red in Christ's cheeks, and the distinctly linear facial features that can be observed in this early work by the painter, were



to become standard and dominate his works, together with the characteristic care and attention to the decoration.[5] The group of his published icons enable us to detect the use of the same iconographic types in his output. An icon of Christ Pantokrator from the church of Saint John Vladimir at Elbasan, signed and dated to 1693, and the matching icon of the Virgin enthroned,[6] have great similarity with the present icon in the iconographic type of Christ, the relief decoration on the background of the icon, and the stylistic features.

Unpublished

1. Chatzidaki 1997, 254-256, no. 25.
2. See cat. no. 31, with bibliography. See also Drandaki 2002, nos. 63-64.
3. See Konidaris 1984, 205-210.
4. Kallamata 1999. Popovska-Korobar 1993 and 2005, 41-52.
5. See cat. nos. 41-43.
6. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, nos. 23, 24. In this catalogue, both icons are erroneously dated to 1771. The icons are also published in the catalogue *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993 (nos. 76, 81), erroneously attributed and dated.




Ο Ω Ν

41. The Virgin enthroned and Child, the Hope of the Despairing

84 x 53.5 x 3.2 cm.
Inv. no. IN 5816
Provenance: Monastery of Saints Peter and Paul, Vithkuq
Date: 1710
Painter: Konstantinos the hieromonk

Despite the great damage it has suffered, the icon with the worn inscription *Η τῶν ἀπελπισμένων [ἐλπίς]* ('the hope of the despairing') exudes an atmosphere of glorification of the Virgin, in which the iconographic elements –the prefigurations, prophecies and crowning of the Virgin by the angels– are combined with the meticulous decoration on the background of the icon and the haloes, clothing, throne and crown. This light atmosphere of wealth and luxury, which verges on baroque, is broken by the Virgin's melancholy gaze and large almond eyes, the restrained grief in the movement of her head and well-drawn mouth, and the barely perceptible way she touches the hand of the infant Christ, who blesses.

The fondness for relief decoration on the gold ground, of which only the remains can be made out here, and for haloes with winding blossoming tendrils, are distinctive features of other icons by Konstantinos,[1] while the embossed ornaments on the edges of the icon are to be found in works by his colleague, David of Selenitza.[2]

The representation of the Tree of Jesse illustrates the vision seen by the prophet Jesse, a tree with many branches in which are depicted the generations of David, with Christ at the top of the tree. In the present icon, the subject is rendered with the aged figure of Jesse at the Virgin's feet, accompanied by the inscription: *ΡΙΖΗC ΙΕCΕ ΚΑΙ ΕΞ ΟCΦΙΟC ΔΑΒΗΔ* ('of the root of Jesse and of the loins of David'), the Virgin enthroned and Child, the prophets and their prophecies, which prefigure the Incarnation of Christ through the Virgin. The subject is a by no means rare iconographic combination of the doctrinally related scenes of the Tree of Jesse and 'From on high the Prophets'.[3] The twelve prophets are depicted in medallions decorated with tendrils of the tree that springs from Jesse. They hold scrolls inscribed with prophecies of the Incarnation, written in inscriptions that are barely legible, badly spelled, and extensively worn. On the left, from top to bottom, can be seen Solomon (*Ἐγὼ κλίνην τοῦ βασιλέως κέκληκά σε Κόρη*) ('I called thee the couch of the King, O daughter'), Daniel (*Ὄρος νοητὸν ἐξ' οὗ ἐτμήθη λίθος*) ('I called thee the conceptual mountain from which a stone was cut'), three figures whose scrolls have been destroyed, and who are identified on iconographical grounds as Ezekiel, Barlaam and Aaron, and Zacharias (*Ἐγὼ λυχνίαν ἑπτάφωτον προεῖδόν σε Κόρη*) ('I foresaw thee as a lamp with seven lights, O daughter'). On the right are depicted David (*Ἐγὼ κιβωτὸν ἡγιασμένην κέκληκά σε κόρη*) ('I called thee a sanctified ark'), Moses (*Ἐγώ σε βάτον κέκληκα, ἀνθρώπων σκέπη*) ('I called thee a bush, a protection for men'), Isaiah (*ἐγὼ δὲ λαβίδα ἀνθρακοφόρον σε εἶδα Κόρη*) ('I saw thee as a tonges for coal, O daughter'), Jacob (*Ἐγὼ δὲ καθ' ὕπνους ἑώρακα κλίμακά σε Κόρη*) ('In my dream I saw thee as a ladder, O daughter'), Jeremiah (*Ἐγὼ δὲ ὁδόν σε εἶδον Ἰσραὴλ νέαν Κόρην*) ('I saw thee as a new way for Israel, O daughter') and Habbakuk (*Ὄρος κατάσκιόν σε εἶδον...*) ('I saw thee as a shady mountain').

At the top of the icon are angels kneeling on clouds holding scrolls with texts of glorification: *Ἄνωθεν οἱ προφῆταί σε προκατήγγειλαν κόρη στάμνον ράβδον πλᾶκα χρυσοῦ...* ('From on high the prophets foretold thee as a pitcher, a rod, a gold plaque...'). The scrolls unfold in a decorative manner, and the angels fix a crown on the Virgin's head with their right hand. This representation of the Crowning of the Virgin, particularly popular in western art, was widespread in Post-Byzantine painting and was preferred for depictions of the Virgin in engravings,[4] which often inspired the present painter[5] as well as his fellow-craftsmen at the same period.

It may be noted that the same type of the Virgin wearing a crown, seated on a decorated throne with a circular backrest, was used by the painter in 1711, one year after he executed the present icon, for an icon in the monastery of Saint Naum at Ohrid.[6] In a despotic icon from the templon of the Simonopetra Monastery on Mount Athos, with the Virgin *Galaktotrophousa* enthroned and wearing a crown, dated to 1702 and signed by Konstantinos,[7] the enthroned Virgin has a similar posture, and, in particular, the throne is of the same type and was presumably preferred by the painter over a period of several years.

The large icon of the Virgin the Tree of Jesse presented here adorned the templon of the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul at Vithkuk, along with the icon of Christ the Great High Priest[8] and that of John the Baptist, which have the same dimensions and style and are also in the Museum of Medieval Art at Korcë.[9] According to the inscription, the icon of Christ was dedicated by Chatzi Thanasis and was signed: *χεὶρ Κωνσταντίνου ἱερομονάχου* ('the hand of Konstantinos, hieromonk'), with the date 1710.[10] In the present icon, the section of the inscription containing the name of the donor has unfortunately been destroyed, but the phrase *ΔΕΗCΙC ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ* ('Prayer of the servant of God') is preserved at the bottom left, and the painter's signature: *ΧΕΙΡ ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΙΕΡΟΜΟΝΑΧΟΥ* ('the hand of Konstantinos, hieromonk') and the date *ΑΨΙ* (1710) at the bottom right. The work belongs to the period of the early maturity of the painter who, as far as we know, was active



from the late 17th to the first three decades of the 18th century.[11] During this period he showed his preference for smooth, light-coloured modelling of the flesh and expressive facial features, elements that, along with his fondness for luxurious decoration, were to dominate his later works.[12]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Trésors d'art albanais 1993, no. 53.

1. See cat. nos. 40, 42-43.
2. See cat. no. 44.
3. See an icon of the Virgin, Tree of Jesse, by Theodoros Poulakis in the Byzantine Museum of Athens, in *Τα Νέα Αποκτήματα* 1997, no. 27 (Chr. Baltoyianni). See also cat. nos. 65, 67.
4. See Charalambidis 2002-2003. Papastratou 1986, 109-145.
5. See also cat. nos. 42, 43.
6. See Grozdanov 1995, 71-82. The same type of throne was rendered by the painter, in 1712, in a wall-painting of the Virgin in the church of the Virgin at Voskopojë (Popovska-Korobar 2005, 44, fig. 6).
7. *ΧΕΙΡ ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΙΕΡΟΜΟΝΑΧΟΥ* ('the hand of Konstantinos, hieromonk'). For the icon, see *Θησαυροί του Αγίου Όρους* 1997, no. 2.95, though the painter's signature is not mentioned.
8. Information: P.L. Vocotopoulos. See also Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 133.
9. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 52.
10. Popa 1998, no. 325.
11. See cat. no. 40.
12. See cat. nos. 42, 43.

42. Saint George

108 x 75 x 6 cm.
Inv. no. IN 7586
Provenance: Church of Saint Nicholas at Voskopojë
Date: About 1725
Painter: Konstantinos the hieromonk

Saint George the dragon-slayer, with the same dimensions and in the same style as Saint Demetrios from the church of Saint Nicholas at Voskopojë,[1] is projected against the gold ground of the icon, mounted on a white horse and thrusting his spear into the mouth of the dragon with red wings, which lies on the ground, next to the water of the spring. According to the *synaxarion*, the dragon's lair was at a spring of water in the homeland of the saint from Kappadokia, and it demanded human flesh in return for the water. When the lot fell on the daughter of king Selvios, the saint appeared in the town mounted on horseback, slew the dragon, and freed the princess. These individual episodes, and also the saint's martyrdom on the wheel, are depicted around the edges of this icon, where the gold decoration is interrupted. The king and queen and two young girls are depicted watching the scene of the dragon-slaying from the walls of the town at the top right of the icon, while at the left edge, next to the spring of water, the young princess, wearing a crown and a *loros*, and rendered on a small scale, departs startled.

The central figure of the icon, the youthful saint, wears a short military tunic and a gold, elabo-





The church of Saint Nicholas at Voskopojë.



rately decorated cuirass, and holds a round shield, with a quiver and a cloak on his shoulders. An angel descends from heaven to crown the martyr. The young slave from Mytilene rides behind him on the gold-bedecked horse, holding the jug, from which he serves the pirates who held him prisoner before he was rescued by the saint. The stance of the mounted saint, as rendered in the present icon, is connected with representations in engravings, which circulated widely in the 18th century.[2]

At the bottom of the icon, beneath the horse's hooves, the inscription *ΔΕΗCIC ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ / Θ(ΕΟ)Υ ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΥ C[..]AP[.]* ('Supplication of the servant of God Nikolaos S [..] AR [.]') is written rather crudely and hastily in black lettering. The reading of the inscription is made difficult by the damage to the icon at this particular point. The donor's forename is Nikolaos, but unfortunately the rest of the inscription is illegible. On the right side of the icon, beneath the dragon's body, is the incomplete signature of the painter *ΧΕΙΡ ΚΩΝ.* ('The hand of Kon[stantinos]') in the same black lettering. Although there is no doubt that this was Konstantinos the hieromonk,[3] the same painter who signed a similar icon of the mounted Saint Demetrios, the problem remains of the hastily written, unfinished signature, particularly since, in the approximately fifteen known icons by him, he invariably signs *χεὶρ Κωνσταντίνου ἱερομονάχου* ('the hand of Konstantinos hieromonk').

The painter's competence in drawing, modelling, composition and decoration, and also the way in which he balances the charming atmosphere of baroque, without the result becoming heavy and excessive, suggests that the work should be dated to the period of his maturity. Factual considerations confirm the date in the third decade of the 18th century.[4]

Unpublished

1. See cat no. 43.
2. See Papastratou 1986, nos. 508, 509.
3. See cat. no. 40.
4. See cat. no. 43.



43. Saint Demetrios

108 x 70 x 7 cm.
Inv. no. IN 7610
Provenance: Church of Saint Nicholas at Voskopojë
Date: About 1725
Painter: Konstantinos the hieromonk

The icons of Saint Demetrios and Saint George (cat. no. 42), which have the same dimensions, come from the church of Saint Nicholas at Voskopojë. Both give the same resplendent impression of the triumph of the great Christian saints, rendered predominantly in gold, red and white. Both icons, which are directly related with each other in terms of the facial features and the treatment of the saints and their horses, have diagonal axes formed by the spears held by the saints. The manner in which the two representations balance each other mirror-wise recalls depictions in engravings, in which martyr-saints are pictured together. A later example in a copperplate engraving of the middle of the 19th century[1] gives an idea of earlier depictions that were probably known to the painter of this icon.

The icon of Saint Demetrios has a relief gold background with tendrils (a common choice by this painter and many other painters and donors of icons at this period),[2] against which the saint is projected, wearing richly decorated military uniform and a green cloak, and mounted on the red horse with luxurious trappings that fills the larger part of the icon.

In the bottom half of the icon, the gold ground is interrupted to make way for a castle at the right, ending in a *heptapyrgion* (fort with seven towers), and a hill with trees at the left, in which the predominant colour is white. A narrow brown strip of ground, with small plants in front of the castle and hill, ends at the sea, on which are seven sailing boats, a three-masted ship with cannon, and a small boat.

This treatment of the seascape and ships is di-



rectly connected with engravings, especially depictions of the monasteries and ship sheds of Mount Athos.[3] The harmoniously combined colours (blue, light brown and white, for the land and sea), and the meticulous details exude a naturalistic intent and festive atmosphere, despite the warlike environment suggested by the tall white walls of the castle with its embrasures, from which cannon protrude. Buildings with gold and red roofs are depicted at the three levels of the castle, within the fortification walls. At the top of it, seven towers link the representation with the city of Thessaloniki and the *Heptapyrgion* there. Thessaloniki is frequently depicted in 18th- and 19th-century engravings with Saint Demetrios,[4] the model for which was probably an earlier copperplate engraving of the city.[5] A round building that recalls the fortified city in the present icon is to be found in a copperplate engraving of the second half of the 18th century with Saint Demetrios and his *skete* in the Vatopedi Monastery,[6] and in a portable icon of the same period with Saint Demetrios and scenes from his life.[7]

The depiction of the city and sailing ships renders a miracle wrought by Saint Demetrios, who saved Thessaloniki from the drought that was plaguing it during the raid by the Avars in 597, by guiding ships loaded with grain to its harbour.[8] In a wall-painting of 1791, in the narthex of the chapel of Saint Demetrios in the katholikon of Vatopedi Monastery, which recounts the saint's miracles, a representation of a walled city with the *Heptapyrgion* and with a sailing ship in its harbour bears the inscription *ὁ ἅγιος ἐλευθέρωσε τοὺς Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἀπὸ τὴν πεῖνα διὰ τοῦ πλοίου* ('the saint rescued the people of Thessaloniki from hunger by means of the ship').[9]

Engraving with Saints George and Demetrios, middle of the 19th century. Papastratos Collection, Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki.



In the present icon, another episode from the life of the saint is depicted on a small scale in front of the city: his victory over the king of the Bulgars, Ioannitzis, also called Skyloyiannis. An impressive feature of the depiction is the painter's intent to render physical details such as the blood running from the wound, or the round shield hanging in midair as the armed king of the Bulgars cartwheels and falls from his terrified horse.

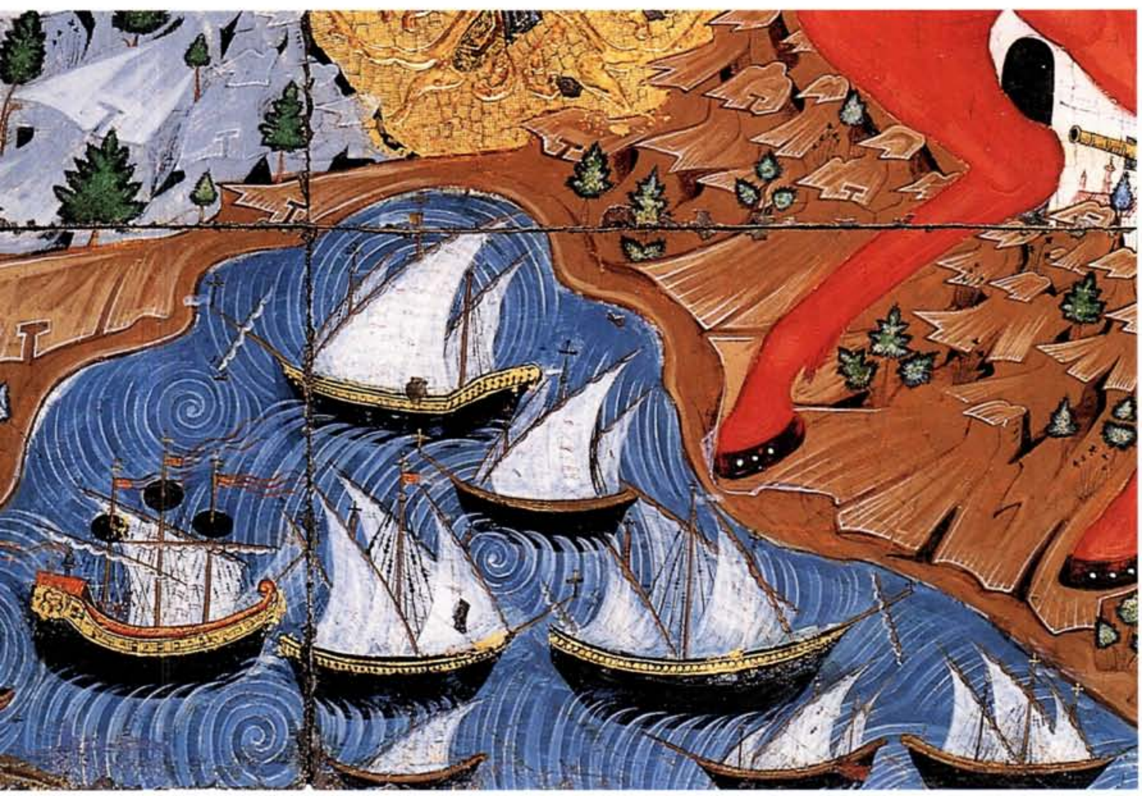
The painter's competence as a miniaturist can be seen in all the individual elements of the icon: in the rendering of details such as the excellently drawn and decorated buildings inside the tower, the horse and panoply of the king of the Bulgars at the bottom right of the icon, the fittings of the warship, the hand of the sailor hauling in the sail, and the mermaid on the prow. The naturalistic intent and the enrichment of the icon with factual details are presumably connected with a corresponding intent in engravings, which are influenced by western art, and also with the public's desire for innovation, which continued into the 18th and 19th century.[10] The painter's signature can be seen in gold lettering at the bottom of the round tower: *ΧΕΙΡ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΙΕΡΟΜΟΝ(Α)ΧΟΥ* ('the hand of Konstantinos the hieromonk').

According to the founder's inscription,[11] the church of Saint Nicholas in Voskopojë, from where this icon comes, was given wall-painted decoration in the year 1726: *διὰ χειρὸς πολυΐστορός τε καὶ ὀξυγράφου καλάμου τοῦ πανοσιωτάτου κυρίου κὺρ Δαβὶδ τοῦ Σελιτζιώτου καὶ τῆς κατ αὐτὸν ξυνορίδος Κωνσταντίνου τε καὶ Χρήστου.* ('By the learned hand and acute pen of the most reverend kyr David of Selenitza and his colleague Konstantinos and Christos'). Konstantinos, who is mentioned in the inscription in a learned style as colleague of the well-known painter David of Selenitza,[12] along with Christos,[13] has been

identified with Konstantinos the hieromonk, the painter of the present icon.[14] Since Konstantinos worked in 1726 on the decoration of the church, which was built in 1721, it must be supposed that at this same period he also painted the two large icons of Saints Demetrios and George, in which can be discerned the painter's competence in composition and decoration, great attention to details, the use of bright colours, and the creation of an atmosphere appropriate to the triumph of the Christian saints. These elements are developed in the environment of luxury dictated by the baroque climate, and of the freedom of expression permitted by the open-mindedness and prosperity of the Orthodox inhabitants of the area in the 18th century.

Unpublished

1. Papastratou 1986, no. 349.
2. See cat. no. 31.
3. See, e.g., Papastratou 1986, nos. 420, 433, 507.
4. See Papastratou 1986, nos. 349, 350.
5. See *Λιμάνια και Καράβια στο Βυζαντινό Μουσείο* 1997, no. 45 (G. Kakavas).
6. Papastratou 1986, no. 450.
7. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, no. 17. See a similar depiction of Thessaloniki enclosed within its walls in an icon of the late 16th-early 17th century (Vocotopoulos 1990, no. 69).
8. Θαῦμα ὄγδοον, Περὶ τῆς ἐν λιμῷ προνοίας τοῦ μεγαλομάρτυρος, Bakirtzis 1997, 137-139.
9. Chatziantoniou 1997, 9. I am grateful to Mr. Bonovas for drawing my attention to the representation. A similar representation, in a portable icon, moreover, dating from the second half of the 18th century, to which I have referred above (see note 7 and photograph), is attributed to Ioannis Tzetiris.
10. See Tourta 1999, 79.
11. Popa 1998, no. 331.
12. See cat. no. 44.
13. See Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 458.
14. For the identification see Kallamata 1999, 69. For the painter see cat. no. 40.





44. The Incredulity of Thomas

57 x 36 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 5328
Provenance: Church of the Virgin at Voskopojë
Date: About 1730
Painter: David of Selenitza(?)

The Incredulity is a reference to Thomas's words: *I shall see in his hands the print of the nails ... I shall not believe* (John 20, 25), expressing his lack of faith in the Resurrection of Christ. Eight days later, when the disciples were gathered together, Jesus came, *the doors being shut, and stood in the midst*, and said to the faithless disciple: *Reach hither they finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing* (John 20, 27-28).

The representation illustrates this moment, at which Christ stands in the midst of the disciples in front of the closed door of the house and uncovers his wounded side, while Thomas touches it with his finger and the other disciples "stand in amazement", according to the *Painter's Manual* of Dionysios of Fournas.

Impressive features of the icon are the ancient-style building with the red cloth spread on the roofs and with its three facades decorated in grisaille, and the frontal masque of a lion's head, which resembles a human face, above the door. This kind of choice, the bulky figures of the disciples, and the differentiated facial features are directly linked with the art of the painter David from Selenitza in the area of Vlorë. David, a notable 18th-century painter who gave expression to a trend on Mount Athos that sought to return to 14th-century models, was capable of expressing himself as a painter in both Palaeologan and Italianising manners.[1] The learned (judging by his signatures) painter worked with colleagues on Mount Athos, and in Thessaloniki, Kastoria and Voskopojë, and his art found many imitators throughout Macedonia.[2] The icon, which has the worn inscription *Η Ψ[ΗΛ]ΑΦΗСΙС Τ[ΟΥ ΘΩ]ΜΑ* and several areas of damage, comes from the church of the Virgin in Voskopojë, an important commercial cultural and artistic centre of the region, where David of Selenitza worked in 1726, decorating the church of Saint Nicholas with wall-paintings and portable icons.[3] In addition to stylistic features shared with the icon of the Incredulity of Thomas, these icons have the same embossed decoration.

Unpublished

1. Chatzidakis 1987, 235.
2. See Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 235-236. Popovska-Korobar 2004, nos. 116-122 and Popovska-Korobar 2005, 53-72, with earlier bibliography.
3. For the wall-paintings see notes 1, 2. Three portable icons from this same church, the Descent from the Cross, the Transfiguration, and the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple are now in the Museum of Art and Archaeology in Tiranë (*Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, nos. 82, 83, 84).

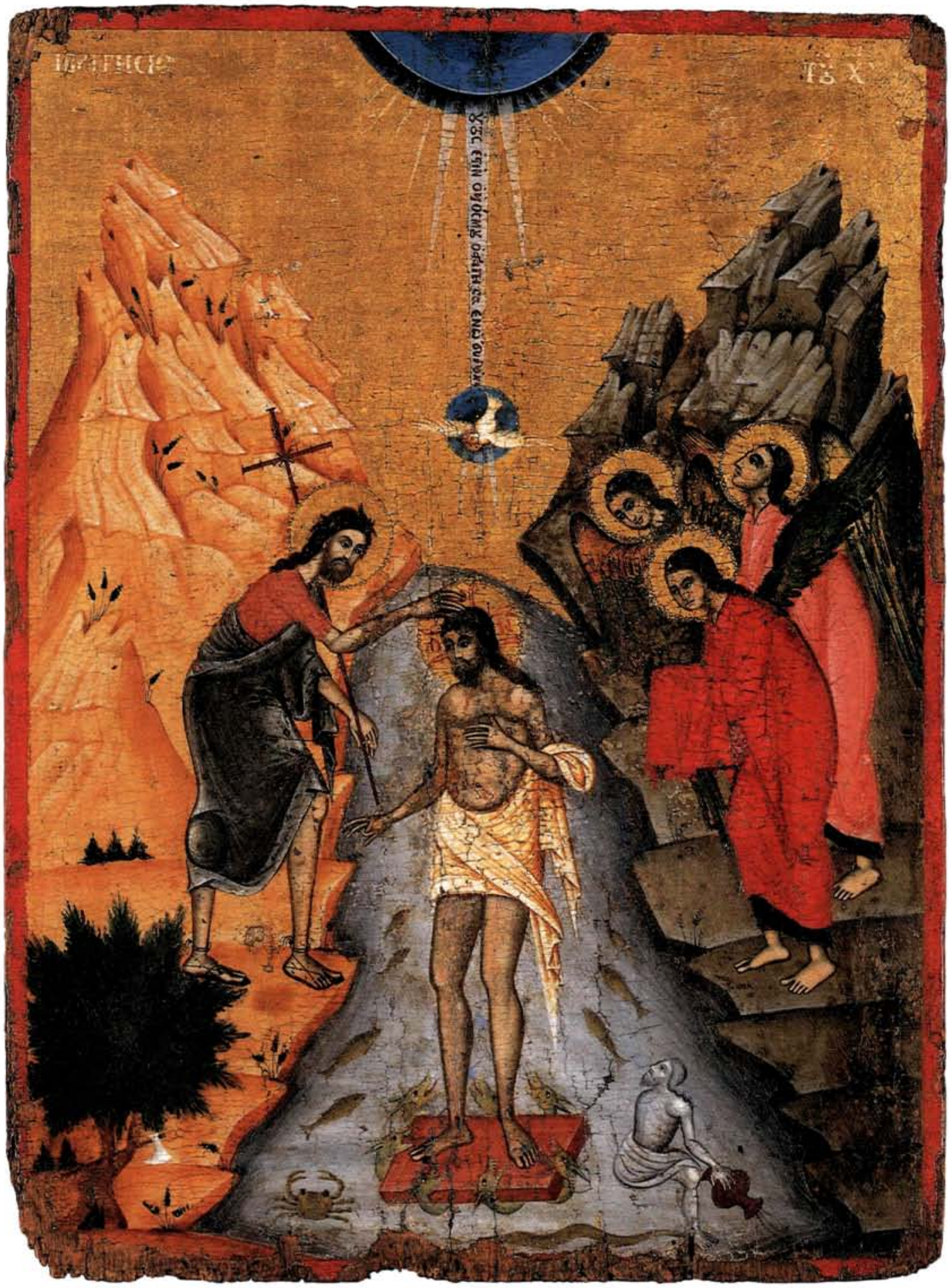
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1. The church of the Virgin at Voskopojë.

2. Saint Mark the evangelist, wall-paintings in the church of Saint John the Baptist in Kastoria.





45. The Baptism of Christ

35 x 26.3 x 2.7 cm.
Inv. no. IN 7183
Provenance: Church of the Holy Wisdom at Përmet
Date: 18th century

The icon follows the established type for the Baptism, with Christ standing in the river Jordan, in which fish and sea monsters swim; at the right can be seen the personification of he river Jordan, who 'turned back', rendered according to Hellenising models. The Baptist stoops from the bank and touches Christ's head. At the bottom can be seen the tree and the axe, illustrating the gospel passage *therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down* (Matthew 3, 10). On the right bank of the river, the angels bow, holding *lentia*; one of them is looking up at the Holy Spirit who descends from heaven "in the form of a dove". One of the rays of heaven has the inscription: *οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἡός μου ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα* (*'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'*) (Matthew 3, 17). On the gold background is the inscription: *Η ΒΑΠΤΗCIC ΤΟΥ Χ(PICT)ΟΥ* ('the Baptism of Christ').

The composition recalls the art of the painter David of Selenitza,[1] though it was executed by a painter of no great competence in the second half of the 18th century.

Unpublished

1. See cat. no. 44.



46. Sanctuary door

120 x 37 x 3.3 cm (left leaf)
122 x 39.5 x 6.5 (right leaf)
Inv. no. IN 5671, 5672
Provenance: Village of Boboshticë, Korcë
Date: 18th century

The gold, wood-carved decoration of the sanctuary door, with winding tendrils ending in trefoils and flowers, with twisted colonnettes amongst them at the archways, recalls works by Epirot woodcarvers of the 18th century.[1]

Part of the decoration of the sanctuary door consists of the embossed circles of the haloes, commonly found in icons from north-Greek workshops.

In the top zone, the Annunciation and prophets are depicted in the arched openings. On the unrolled scrolls held by the prophets Solomon and David, passages relating to the Virgin and the Incarnation are written with no great claims to correct spelling: *πολλαὶ θυγατέρες ἐποίησαν δύναμιν, σὺ δὲ ὑπέρκεισαι* ('Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all') (Proverbs 31, 29) and *ἄκουσον, θύγατερ καὶ ἴδε καὶ κλῖνον τὸ οὖς σου* ('Hearken, o daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear') (Psalm 45, 10). The angel, with a wide, vigorous stride, offers a lily to the Virgin, who is depicted standing in a posture of acceptance. In the bottom zone of the sanctuary door, the Three Hierarchs and Saint Spyridon are depicted in arched openings. It is worth noting the striking similarity between the movement, clothing and even the flower of the angel on the present sanctuary door with the corresponding fea-

tures of the angel depicted on an earlier sanctuary door from the same village.[2]

The light-coloured modelling, the attempt to render the bodies with a certain volume, and the decorative grisaille on the Virgin's throne, are elements whose quality points to painted models of the 18th century, such as the works by David of Selenitza, the well-known painter from this region.[3]

Unpublished

1. See Drandaki 2002, no. 55. There is similar decoration on a cross from an epistyle from Arbanassi dating from the 18th century, now in the National Gallery in Sofia (Gergova 1993, 95, fig. 27).

2. See cat. no. 22.

3. See cat. no. 44.

47. Saint John Vladimir and scenes from his life

77.4 x 52.7 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 5324
Provenance: Monastery of the Virgin, Ardenicë
Date: 1739
Painter: Konstantinos of Shpatit

The interest of this icon of Saint John Vladimir and scenes from his life resides mainly in following the iconographic account of the life of a saint who is not widely known, and in tracing the creation of the composition in the context of the archdiocese of Ohrid in the 18th century.

The saint, who was king of Dalmatia and son-in-law of Samuel, tsar of the Bulgars, lived in the late 10th-early 11th century († 1015) and was a contemporary of Saints Clement and Naum of Ohrid. He was distinguished by his great piety and was murdered by his wife's brother on his return from a victorious campaign against the Byzantine emperor. These details are derived from the three known services for him –two printed in Venice in 1690 and 1774, and the third in Voskopojë in 1741[1]– in which the legends connected with his life and miracles are recounted.

The veneration of Saint Vladimir, who is particularly honoured in Orthodox Albania, the general area of Ohrid, Bulgaria, and Hungary, was disseminated in the context of the renewal of the archdiocese of Ohrid under the enlightened guidance of the archbishop Ioasaph. The cultured, dynamic prelate led the archdiocese from 1719 to 1745 and elevated it into an important spiritual and artistic force of the time, the most important centres of which were Ohrid and Voskopojë. Ohrid had a distinguished cultural tra-



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1. The monastery of Saint John Vladimir near Elbasan.

2. Engraving of Saint John Vladimir in the Stemmatographia.



dition since the time of Byzantium and enjoyed close relations with Mount Athos; Voskopojë, occupied mainly by Vlach peoples, was a centre of trade and a focus of the economic flowering of the period.[2]

The original centre of the veneration of Saint Vladimir was the monastery named after him at Elbasan, where his relic was kept until 1944.[3] It should be noted that Elbasan and Ardenicë, from where the present icon comes, belonged to the jurisdiction of the archdiocese of Ohrid.

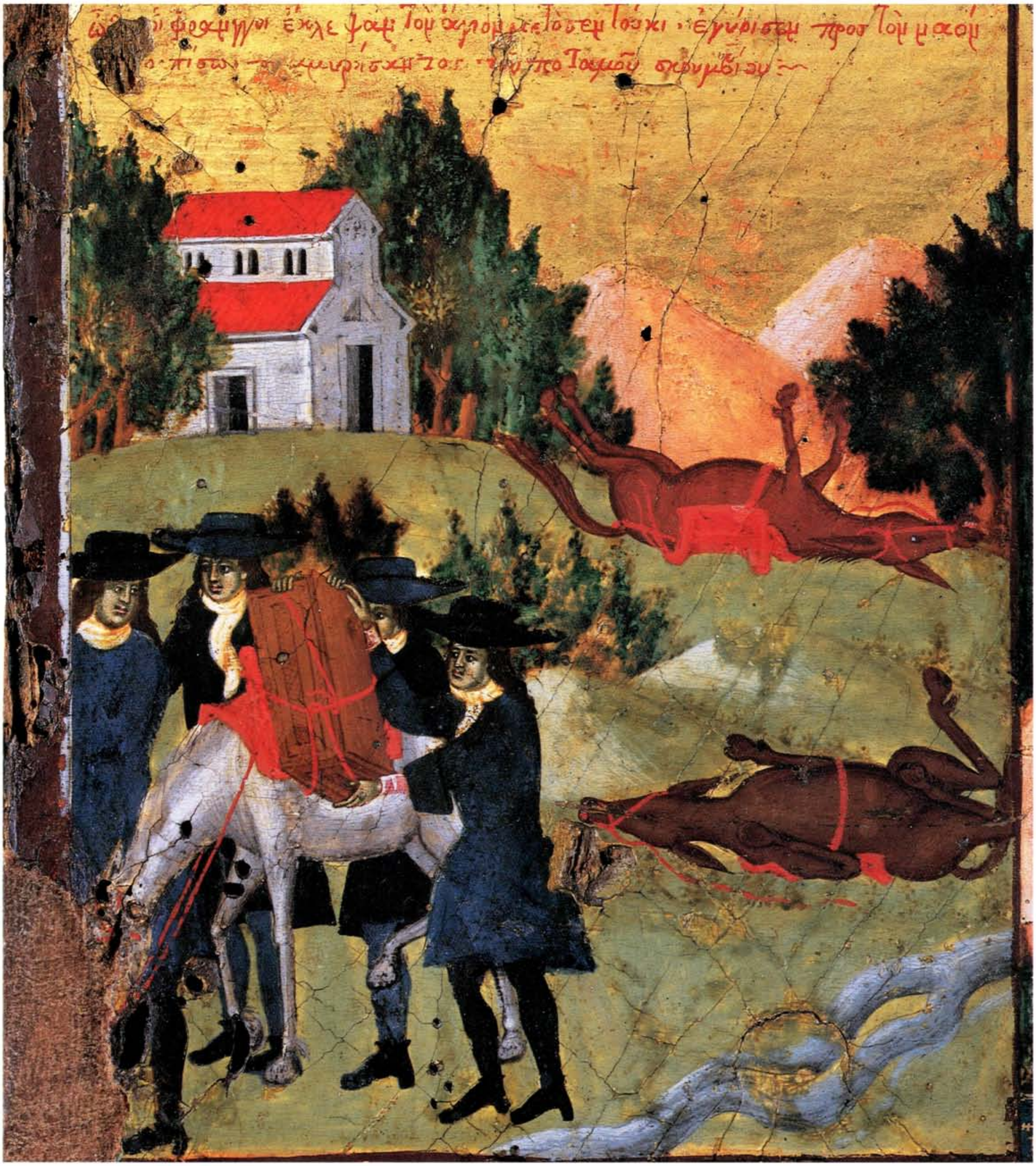
The evolution of the iconography of the saint can be traced in portable icons, wall-paintings and engravings, mostly of the 17th and 18th century.[4] The engravings were important landmarks in the formulation of the iconography and probably served as the model for the present icon.

The saint is depicted in two engravings by Isabella Piccini, which adorned the saint's *Akolouthia*, published in 1690 in Venice.[5] A representation of the saint was also included by the well-known Serb painter and engraver Christofor Zefarović, in the *Stemmatographia*, a Serbian book printed in Venice in 1741 containing drawings by him. The same representation was used by him a year later to illustrate the copperplate engraving with scenes of the saint's life[6] printed at the expense of wealthy Mochopolitans, which later circulated as an independent engraving.[7]

A portable icon with the saint mounted on horseback and scenes from his life in the monastery of Saint Catherine on Sinai has been dated about 1700.[8]

In 1711, the icon of Saints Vladimir and Marina[9] was placed on the iconostasis of the church of Saint Naum at Ohrid, in a corresponding position with the one occupied on the same iconostasis by Saints Clement and Naum,[10] indicating the important place held by the saint in local veneration.

In the present icon, from the church of the Virgin at Ardenicë, the saint is shown in the large central representation, with the inscription: *ΑΓΙΟC ΙΩ(ΑΝΝΗC) Ο ΒΛΑΔΙΜΗΡΟC* ('Saint John Vladimir'), enthroned, wearing royal raiment, and holding the martyr's cross and his severed head in his hands. Around him, in rectangular panels, are painted twelve scenes inspired by his life and martyrdom.[11] They begin at the top left, continue to the right and down, and end at the left, beneath the first scene. In the top zone are depicted *Η ΓΕΝΝΗCΙC ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ* ('the birth of the saint'), his education, in a scene with the inscription *ΩΔΕ Η ΜΑΘΗCΙC ΕΙC ΤΑ ΑΓΙΑ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ* ('here his teaching in the Holy Scriptures'), and his coronation, with the inscription *ΩΔΕ ΕCΤΕΨΑΝ ΒΑCΙΛΕΑ ΤΟΝ ΑΓΙΟΝ* ('here they crowned the saint king'). The following two scenes are connected with the building of a house of prayer by the saint, at a point in the forest where, accompanied by three attendants, he saw an eagle with a cross on its wings and *ΩΔΕ CΤΑΜΑΤΙCΑC Ο ΑΕΤΟC ΕΠΕΖΕΥCΕΝ Ο ΑΓΙΟC Κ(ΑΙ) ΕΠΡΟCΚΥΝΗCΕ ΤΟΝ ΤΙΜΙΟΝ CΤΑΥΡΟΝ* ('here the eagle stopped and the saint worshipped the Holy Cross'). The next scene depicts the saint's victory over the Byzantine emperor Basil II Bulgaroktonos, with the inscription *ὧδε πολεμόντας μὲ τὸν βασιλέα Βασίλειον ἐδίωξεν ὁ ἅγιος ἀπὸ τὰ σύνορά του* ('here fighting against king Basil, the saint drove him from his borders'), followed by a scene of the saint's murder at the hand of his wife's brother, which has the inscription *ὧδε γυρίζοντας ἐκ τοῦ πολέμου τὸν ἔκοψεν ὁ γυναικάδελφός του μὲ τὸ ἴδιόν του σπαθί* ('here, as he returned from war his wife's brother cut him down with his own sword'). The three scenes in the bottom zone, which are fairly extensively damaged, depict the saint's return with his severed head in his hand, and his dormition, in the presence of prelates, priests, soldiers and the populace, in accordance with the *synaxarion*. These representations are accompanied by the inscriptions: *ὧδε ἐπερηπάτησεν ἀπάνω εἰς τὸ μουλάρι βαστώντας μὲ τὰς χεῖράς του τὴν τιμίαν κεφαλήν*, *ὧδε τὸ μουλάρι ἐγονάτισεν τὸν ἅγιον* και *ἡ κοίμηση τοῦ ἁγίου* ('here he proceeded on the mule holding his holy head in his hands', 'here the mule kneeled for the saint', and 'the dormition of the saint'). The next two scenes relate to the adventure of his miraculous relic, which was stolen by the Franks and returned home miraculously, following he river Skoumvios in the area of Elbasan, as explained by the inscription: *ὧδε οἱ φράγγοι ἔκλεψαν τὸν ἅγιον με τὸ σεντούκι ἐγύρισεν πρὸς τὸν ναὸν ὀπίσω πλυμηρήσαντος τοῦ ποταμοῦ Σκουμβίου* ('thus the Franks stole the saint with the chest and he returned home to the church when the river Skoumvios flooded'). The faithful then carried the sacred relic in procession to the church of the monastery, in the scene with the inscription *ὧδε ἄραντες τὸ ἅγιον λείψανον ἐκ τοῦ ποταμοῦ καὶ ἔθεσαν αὐτὸ εἰς τὸν ναόν* ('thus lifting the holy relic from the river they placed it in the church'). The final scene, with the inscription *ΚΑΡΛΑ ΘΕΩΠΙΑC ΚΑΙ ΚΤΗΤΩΡ ΤΗC ΑΓΙΑC ΜΟΝΗC ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ* ('Karla Theopias and founder of the holy monastery of the saint') depicts the "very tall Karla Theopias, nephew of the then king of France",[12] wearing resplendent royal raiment, next to the saint's church at Elbasan. According to the *synaxarion*, Karolos Thopias rebuilt the saint's church, which had fallen into ruins over time. In fact, the founder's inscription of the church, with the date 1382, states, in an expression similar to that in the *synaxarion*, that *...ὁ πανυψιλώτατος πρῶτος Κάρλας ὁ Θεωπίας ἀνεψιὸς δὲ καὶ αἵματος ρύγας τῆς Φραγγίας ... οἰκοδόμησεν τὸν πάνσεπτον ναὸν τοῦτον τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Βλαδιμήρου...* ("...His Highness, Karlas the First Theopias, nephew and king by descent of France ... built this venerable church of saint John Vladimir...").[13] In the 15th century, Karolos



Thopias was ruler of the region between Durrës, Kruja and Tiranë, and erected many castles and churches.[14]

In the present icon, the iconographic models for some of the scenes, such as the Birth, the Dormition and the Education of the saint, are associated with corresponding scenes from lives of saints, such as the Virgin or Saint Nicholas. In the scene of the Birth, for example, the iconographic elements are drawn from the corresponding scene of the Birth of the Virgin, with details that betray good models, such as the girl spinning and at the same time rocking the infant's cradle, and the girl with the veil tied in a knot on her head, a feature found in the iconography of the scene from the late 15th and early 16th century onwards.[15] In the scenes that are not directly connected with corresponding scenes from the lives of other saints, the compositions are more free, with naturalistic features included in the rendering of landscapes and animals, and even with depictions of contemporary dress, such as the garments worn by the Franks stealing the saint's relic.

The central figure of the saint, wearing the royal *loros*, a red cloak and a crown on his head, and holding the martyr's cross in one hand and his severed head in the other, is closely connected with the engraving by Isabella Piccini, from the Venice *Akolouthia* of 1690,[16] and also with the full-length figure of the saint in the icon by the painter Athanasios of Korcë,[17] a contemporary of the present painter. The presence of the western-style throne in the icon from the monastery of Ardenicë also links the representation with western engravings.

The icon of Saint Vladimir has a close typological and stylistic affinity with the icon of Saint Marina and scenes from her life by the same painter, from the monastery of Saint Marina in the same area of Ardenicë. This icon was transferred to the National Museum of Ohrid in 1962.[18] The present icon does not appear to be directly connected with the engraving of Zefarović mentioned above, either in the rendering of the central representation of the enthroned saint, or in the individual scenes. The few elements in common are insufficient to trace the two works to a common model, or to link the icon of the hierodeacon Konstantinos with the later engraving of Zefarović, despite the fact that D. Davidov, who has studied Zefarović, asserts that the Serb painter and engraver drew his inspiration for his composition from an earlier model, an icon or another engraving of the popular local saint.[19]

Beneath the saint's throne in the central representation, is an inscription in two lines of gold, calligraphic lettering on a green ground, unfortunately illegible at several points because of wear: *+ΑΛΒΑΝΙΗC ΤΕ ΑΝΑΞ ΙΩΑΝΝΗ ΒΛΑΔΙΜΗΡΕ + Α..ΗC ΚΑΛΩΝ [20] C Ι Γ ΓΕ ΑΓ Λ . ΑΝ. . ΡΑ ΚΑΜΟΙ ΤΩ ΘΕΡΑΠΟΝΤΙ+ / ΤΗΣ ΑΡΔΕΥΟΥCΗC ΑΝΤΩΝΙΩ ΤΕ + ΕΤΟC ΑΠΟ Χ(ΡΙCΤ)ΟΥ [ΑΨΛ]Θ [ΔΙΑ ΧΕΙΡΟC] ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΙΕΡΟΔΙΑΚΟΝΟΥ ΕΚ CΠΑΘΕΙΑC*

In this inscription, an appeal is addressed to Saint John Vladimir, called king of Albania, on behalf of the 'servant' of the monastery, probably the painter himself, who was hierodeacon, and on behalf of one Antonios. There follows the date *[ΑΨΛ]Θ* from the birth of Christ, of which all that remains are traces of a *Λ* and the final letter *Θ*, and which I restore as 1739.[20]

The learned appellation *Ardeousa* refers to the monastery of the Virgin at Ardenicë. The monastery occurs in literary texts and inscriptions with both appellations. It is called the *Virgin Ἀρδενίτσα*, for example, in inscriptions dating from the middle of the 18th century,[21] and *Ἀρδεύουσα* in an inscription in 1776[22] and much later in 1818.[23] The inscription on this icon ends with the signature of the painter Konstantinos hierodeacon of *Spatheia*[24] (Shpatit), an area of central Albania, to which Elbasan, one of the places at which Vladimir is venerated, belongs.

If the now barely legible date of the icon is indeed 1739, this is the first known work by the painter. Icons from the iconostasis of the same monastery were painted by him in 1744. In the icon of Christ *ΔΙΑ ΔΑΠΑΝΗC ΤΟΥ ΡΟΥΦΕΤΙΟΥ ΤΩΝ ΧΑΛΚΕΩΝ ΤΗC ΜΟCΧΟΠΟΛΕΟC* ('at the expense of the guild of coppersmiths of Moschopolis') he again signed *ΧΕΙΡ ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΙΕΡΟΔΙΑΚΟΝΟΥ ΕΚ CΠΑΘΕΙΑC* ('the hand of Konstantinos hierodeacon of Spatheia').[25] In 1748, the same painter signed another icon of Christ in the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul at Vithkuk,[26] and in 1754-1755 he worked on the icons and wall-paintings in the monastery of Saint Marina at Llenge (Mokres).[27] His final known works –portable icons in the churches of Saint Peter at Kavaje and Saint Prokopios at Verdove– are dated to 1767.[28] Several works by him are now in the Museum of Medieval Art at Korcë.[29]

Konstantinos was a literate painter, as is clear from his script and the texts of his inscriptions, who enjoyed authority and recognition in the environment of the archdiocese of Ohrid. Although his art does not betray any special talent, and

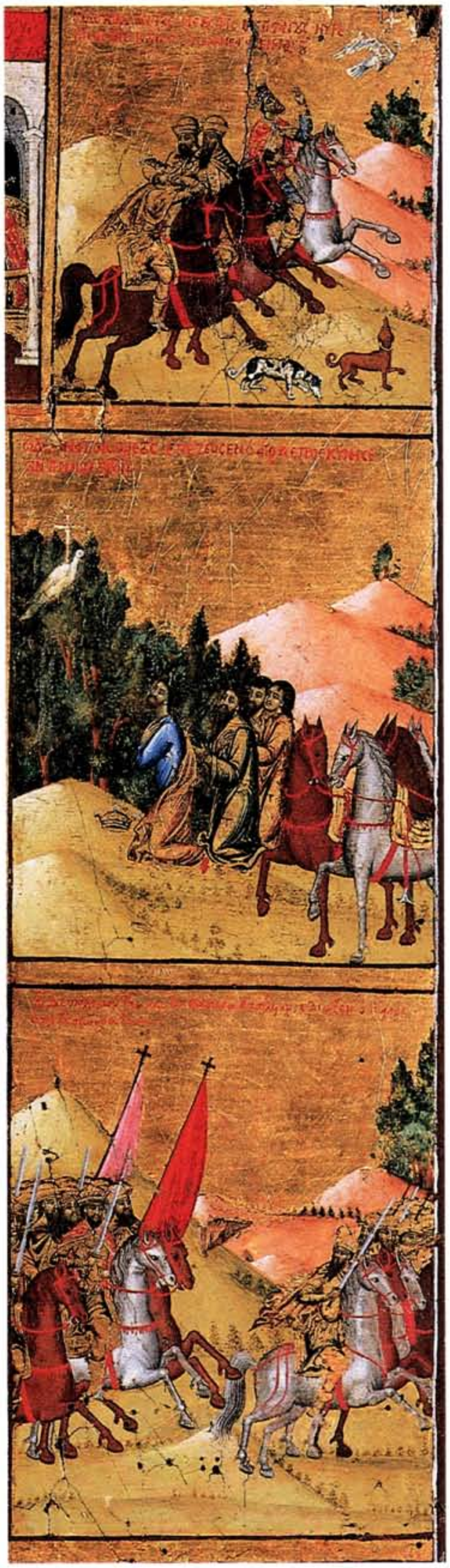


the faces in his icons have a certain ugliness, he appears to have been competent at composing multifigural representations like the one in the present icon, in the icon of Saint Marina and scenes from her life, and in the icon of the *Akathistos Hymn*.[30] The icon of Saint Vladimir and scenes from his life is one of the best examples of the work of Konstantinos of Spatheia, and reveals ability creatively to reproduce good models.

Unpublished

1. Petit 1926, 121-123.
2. See Grozdanov 1990. Grozdanov 1983.
3. See Peyfuss 1996, 122-124.
4. For the evolution of the iconography of the saint and representations of him in portable icons and wall-paintings see Grozdanov 1983, 211-249. See also the recent publication Popovska-Korobar 2005, 87-91, with complete earlier bibliography. See also cat. no. 57.
Note also the statement that the saint was depicted in wall-paintings by the 16th-century painter Onouphrios (Peyfuss 1996, 125, fig. 13).
5. See Papastratou 1986, 242, figs. 1, 2.
6. Davidov 1999, pl. p. 101.
7. Papastratou 1986, 241-149. See also Davidov 1999, 21-32.
8. Ostrogorsky 1970, 159-169.
9. Grozdanov 1990, fig. 74.
10. Grozdanov 1990, 218-219.
11. For the saint's *synaxarion* see Doukakis 1963, 22, May, and Melovski 1996, 172-174.
12 Doukakis 1963, 215.
13. Popa 1998, no. 2. The inscription has been in the Historical Museum of Kombetar since the church was destroyed.
14. *Albanien* 1988, 463, no. 383. See also Pollo and Puto, 80-100.
15. See Vocotopoulos 1990, 102.
16. Papastratou 1986, 242, fig. 2.
17. See cat. no. 57. Grozdanov 1983, 213.
18. Popova 1998, 33-39.
19. Davidov 1999, 44-45, 59.
20. The restoration is consistent with Th. Popa's reading (Popa 1998, no. 114), but not with the earlier date of Grozdanov 1983, 215, who dates it to 1731.
21. Popa 1998, nos. 121, 122.
22. Of the abbot of *Ἀρδεύουσα* (Popa 1998, no. 138).
23. Popa 1998, no. 48.
24. Although, in all the known inscriptions, the painter





signs ἐκ Σπαθείας (see Popa 1998, nos. 32, 34, 37, 120, 135, 349), he is called Spatharaku in the foreign bibliography (see *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, nos. 54-59. Caca 2002).

25. Popa 1998, no. 120. For the other icons see Popovska-Korobar 2005, 90.

26. Popa 1998, no. 349.

27. Popovska-Korobar 2005, 87-91.

28. Popovska-Korobar 2005, 87-91.

29. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, nos. 29, 30. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, nos. 54-59. See also Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 136 (Konstantinos 17).

30. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 57. Popova 1998, 33-39.

48. All Saints

117 x 50 cm.
Inv. no. 5791
Provenance: Monastery of Saints Peter and Paul, Vithkuq, Korcë
Date: 1762
Painter: Konstantinos of Korcë (attributed)

The subject of the All Saints has been excerpted from the composition of the Last Judgement and depicts the Deisis, the bands of the righteous, and Paradise.

At the top is a depiction of the Holy Trinity with Saint John the Baptist and the Virgin in a Deisis scene, and the choir of Angels. Outside the disk containing the Holy Trinity (with the Ancient of Days and Christ seated on clouds amidst cherubim, with their feet resting on wheels and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove), the symbols of the evangelists are depicted in the four corners. Representations of Adam and Eve, the apostles, hierarchs, martyrs and saints are crowded together in the next three zones. The final zone has a representation of Paradise, with low hills, trees and flowers, and the three aged figures of Adam and Eve and the good robber. Isaac holds a cloth before him, from which emerge the souls of the righteous; souls can also be seen 'in the bosom of Abraham and Jacob'.

According to the inscription written in white lettering on the black background of the bottom zone, *+ ΔΕΗCIC ΤΩΝ ΔΟΥΛΩΝ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΚΑΝΑΤΑΡΙΔΩΝ ΟΠΑΡΛΗΔΕC, ΤΖΕΒΡΕΝΜΠΑCIΔΩΝ, ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙ / ΚΟCΤΑC ΝΙΚΟC ΜΠΗΤΡΙ ΘΑΝΑCI ΝΤΕΝΤΕC ΓΓΙΟΚΑC ΚΟCΤΑC ΕΤΟΥC 1762 ΑΥΓΟΥCΤΟΥ 27* ('Prayer of the servants of God, the jug-makers from Opar, the textile-makers, Martyris Kostas Nikos Bitris Thanasis Dedes Giokas Kostas, in the year 1762, August 27'), the icon was dedicated to the church by members of professional groups from the area of Opar in Albania. It was a common practice at this period for Christians everywhere to make financial contributions and dedicate icons. Dedications were made by families, and also by professional groups, such as, in this case, the jug-makers from the area of Opar[1] and the *tzevrenbashides*

1

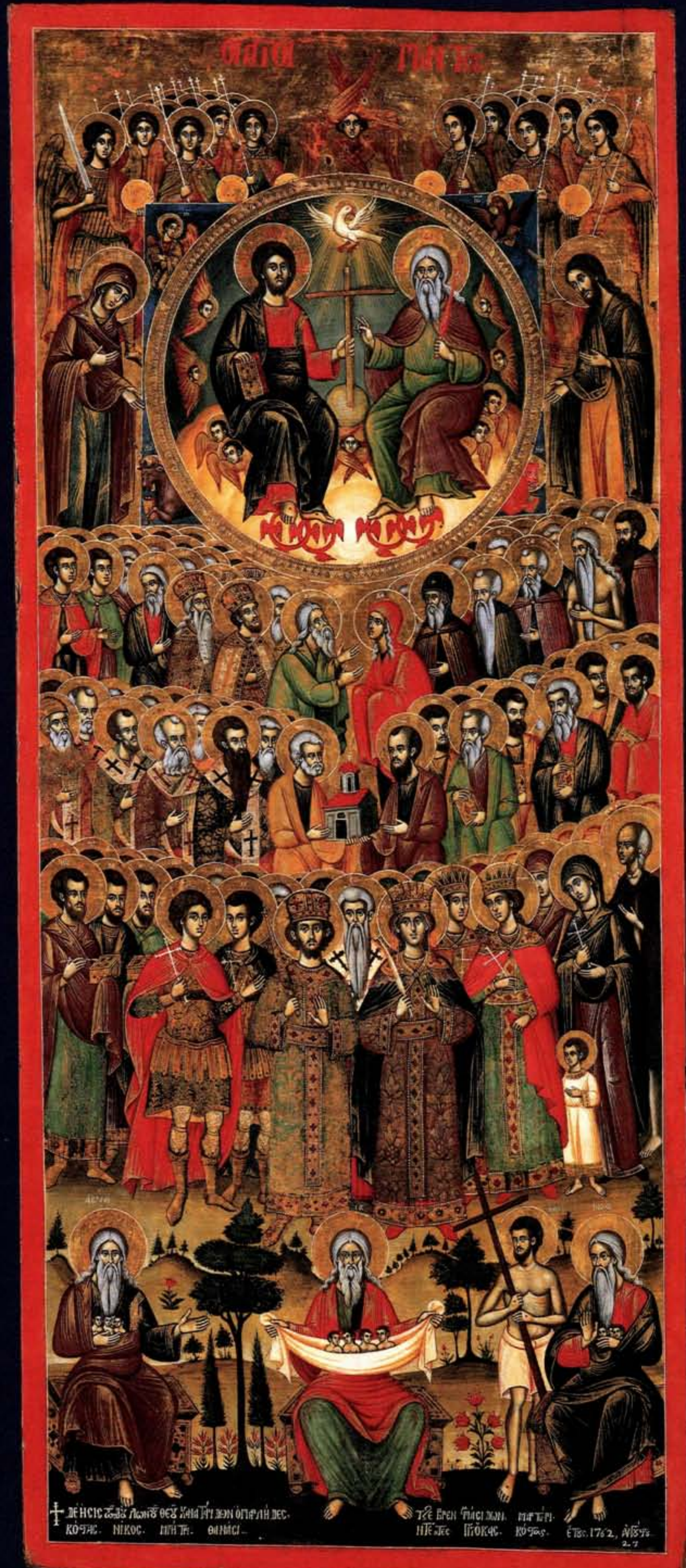


2



1. Paradise, detail of a wall-painting in the porch of the katholikon of the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul at Vithkuk.

2. The katholikon of the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul at Vithkuk.





who are not found in the bibliography on guilds,[2] as far as I know, but were probably makers or sellers of *tzevredes*, which were used as head-covers. In keeping with the practice of the time,[3] the members of the guild are mentioned by name in the icon dedicated by them: Martyris, Nikos, Bitri, Thanasis, Dedes, Giokas, and Kostas.[4] They are followed by the date 27 August, 1762.

The inhabitants of Opar and dedicators of the icon probably had in mind the decoration of the church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Karambionozi, Opar, which, according to certain evidence, was executed by the painters of Korcë.[5] In any case, the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul at Vithkuk, outside Korcë, from which the present icon comes, was 'venerable and renowned', and received dedications from the faithful of the surrounding area, such as the present icon dedicated by the guilds of Opar. The monastery, according to the relevant manuscript, was built, renovated and decorated with wall-paintings and portable icons with money from the faithful, collected by the abbot Tarasios during his journey to Matzaria (Hungary), and with contributions from merchants of Voskopojë resident in Lechia (Poland).[6] In 1761, *ἐκτίσθη καὶ ἐσκαλίσθη ὁ τέμπλος ὅλος μὲ τὰ ἔξοδα τῶν μοσχοπολιτῶν ὅπου πραγματεύονται εἰς τὴν Λεχίαν τῶν ὁποίων ἡ ποσότης εἶναι ἑξιακόσια γρόσια* ('the entire templon was built and carved at the expense of the Moschopolites who trade in Lechia, the total of which is six hundred piastres').[7] One year later, the icon of the All Saints was commissioned by the people of Opar. Another two icons were probably commissioned from the same painter along with the icon of the All Saints: the Synaxis of the Archangels, dated 1762, and the Virgin enthroned,[8] both of which have the same dimensions as the icon of the All Saints examined here. One year later, in 1763, the painters of Korcë undertook to decorate the church with wall-paintings.[9]

The art of the painters of Korcë can be recognised at once in the balanced, properly constructed composition, in the meticulous execution, the lively colours, and the decoration and wealth of the garments. The band of saints, in particular, is representative of the choices of the able painter Konstantinos[10] in the selection of painting models. It is also indicative of his technical powers, as seen in the finely worked panoply of Saint George, and also in the rich, harmonious treatment of the decoration on the royal robes worn by Saints Constantine and Helen. All the features of the icon, and the choice of a conservative iconographic model, suggest that it should be attributed to Konstantinos, the elder brother of the Korcë painters. The painter used parts of the same representation in later works, both wall-paintings and portable icons, such as the wall-painting of the Last Judgement in the final zone of the *lite* of the katholikon of Philotheou Monastery;[11] in the representation of the Holy Trinity in a disk, in a wall-paintings in the exonarthex of the katholikon of the Xiropotamou Monastery in 1783;[12] and in icon cat. no. 52. Representations of the Holy Trinity and of Paradise are common in engravings of the period, which were presumably used by the painter as models.[13]

The icon is an example of the fine art of the painters from Korcë, and also of the way in which they responded to commissions from the faithful. It is also valuable historical testimony for the guilds in the region of Opar and their members in the second half of the 18th century. At the same time, it adds a link to the chain of evidence at our disposal for the manner in which an important monastery, the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul at Vithkuk, which was a shrine of pilgrimage for the inhabitants of the area of Korcë, was built and decorated, with donations and commissions by 'prosperous guilds of Orthodox merchants'.


ΝΙΚΟC.
1762
27

Unpublished

1. Wall-painting no. 17, church of Saint Nicholas in Opar (Ducellier 1965, 202. Popa 1966, 780. See Tsigaras 2003).
2. For the guilds see Arnaoutoglou 2002, with comprehensive earlier bibliography.
3. See Bonovas 1998, 197-220. An icon of the All Saints dedicated by the guild of the *vaenades* lists twelve baptismal names and the date 1821 (Bonovas 1998, 208-209).
4. For baptismal names in icons see Yiakoumis 2000.
5. Popa 1959.
6. Vapheidis 1900.
7. Tsigaras 2003, 43.
8. See Drishti 2003, nos. 38, 39.
9. Tsigaras 2003.
10. For the painter see cat. no. 49.
11. See Tsigaras 2003, fig 248.
12. Tsigaras 2003, fig. 245.
13. The type of both the Holy Trinity and Paradise are to be found in engravings. For the Holy Trinity see Papastratou 1986, no. 168, and for Paradise, eadem, nos. 61-66 and pp. 104-108.



49. The Nativity of Christ

54 x 44 cm.
Inv. no. IN 5335
Provenance: Metropolitan church of the Zoodochos Pege, Korcë
Date: 1770
Painter: Konstantinos of Korcë

Three icons in the exhibition (cat. nos. 49, 50, 51) come from the Dodekaorton that adorned the metropolitan church of the Zoodochos Pege at Korcë. The church was dedicated to Saint Charalambos (who protected the faithful against the plague), the Virgin Life-Giving Source, and Saint Bessarion. According to the founder's inscription, now lost,[1] the painter Konstantinos of Korcë and his colleagues seem to have undertaken the wall-painted decoration of the church as well as the Dodekaorton icons. In addition to the Nativity, the icons from the Dodekaorton presented in the catalogue include the Last Supper and Pentecost. All the other icons, painted by Konstantinos, are now in the Museum of Medieval Art at Korcë: Sunday of the Paralysed Man, dated 1771, the Crucifixion, the Raising of Lazarus, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Ascension, the Dormition of the Virgin, and the Descent into Hell -all with the same dimensions and dated to 1770.[2] The group was completed by the Birth of the Virgin, signed ΧΕΙΡ ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ('the hand of Konstantinos'), with the same dimensions and also dated to 1770.[3]

Konstantinos was head of a very productive family painting workshop, that was active mainly in parts of Albania, the archdiocese of Ohrid and Mount Athos[4] from 1736 to the first decades of the 19th century. The painter Konstantinos collaborated at first with his brother, Athanasios,[5] and was then followed in the profession by his son Terpos,[6] and the two sons of Athanasios, the *most learned* Naum (1780, 1783)[7] and the priest Efthymios (1792-1819).[8] The profession practised by the members of this family of *excellent, most learned* and *Orthodox painters*, as they are called in the documents and the meticulous, calligraphic Greek inscriptions in their work, became their surname and is still

The church of the Zoodochos Pege, north side. The National Museum of Medieval Art of Korcë is housed in part of the church.




Η ΓΕΝΝΗϹΙϹ
ΤΟΥ ΧΥ

born by their descents in Korcë.[9] Between 1736 and 1783, Konstantinos and his brother Athanasios executed the wall-painted decoration for about fifteen monuments, mainly in Korcë, Voskopojë, Vithkuk and on Mount Athos. They usually signed their work: *διὰ χειρῶν αὐταδέλφων Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Ἀθανασίου ἐκ πόλεως Κοριτζᾶς* ('by the hand of the brothers Konstantinos and Athanasios from the town of Korcë'), as in the katholikon of the Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos, in 1765.[10] Confirmation of the recognition accorded to their art and the fame they acquired is provided by the invitation to them in 1782 to undertake the wall-painted decoration of the katholikon and two chapels of the Xiropotamou Monastery on Mount Athos,



as 'masters of the painter's art', on the basis of the iconographic programme of the learned Kaisarios Daponte, and for a large fee of 8000 piastres.[11] At the same time, Konstantinos signed a fairly large number of portable icons, from 1737 to 1785, as *Κωνσταντῖνος ἀρβανίτης* ('Konstantinos the Albanian'), as in icons of the *skete* of Saint Demetrios in the Vatopedi Monastery in 1742, and also *διὰ χειρὸς Κωνσταντίνου ἀρβανίτου ἐκ πόλεως Κορυτσᾶς* ('by the hand of Konstantinos the Albanian from the town of Korcë'), as in 1768 on the templon of the Docheiariou Monastery on Mount Athos.[12] In these icons, which usually adorned church templa include both signed and attributed icons,[13] can be seen the same facial types, worked meticulously though with a certain clumsiness in the rendering of frontal figures, and the severe, classical buildings in the rendering of the setting.

The icon of the Nativity is a fine, balanced composition developed around the cave at the centre, lit by the star. Joseph and Mary kneel and venerate the new-born child, while the animals keep it warm in the manger. The successive episodes of the Nativity are arranged symmetrically and played out at different levels. At the top left of the icon, angels hover holding open scrolls with the inscription: *ΔΟΞΑ ΕΝ ΥΨΙCΤΟΙC ΘΕΩ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙ ΓΗC ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΕΝ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΙC ΕΥΔΟΚΙΑ* ('Glory be to God on high and in earth peace and prosperity amongst men'), while at the right, an angel stoops to announce the Birth of the Lord to a young shepherd. At the centre left are depicted the three Magi on horseback, wearing royal raiment, and looking at the star and talking to each other. At the bottom of the icon, the shepherds, one covered with a cape and the other with a bag hanging on his shoulder, the flock of shepherds around the tree, the dog and goats, who nibble at a tree, all reveal the love of the painters of the time for picturesque details as well as details of contemporary dress. Saint Stephen (27 December) was added, evidently after the completion of the Nativity scene, at the left edge of the icon, in the place where originally a shepherd played his flute, which can be seen next to the seated dog. In this icon of 1770, the painter repeats the same iconographic type that he used, with slight variations, in the decoration of four monuments on Mount Athos: in the Philotheou Monastery in 1752, in the *kyriakon* of the *skete* of Saint Anna in 1757, in the *kyriakon* of the *skete* of Xenophontos in 1766, and in his last work in the Xiropotamou Monastery in 1783.[14]

The central subject of the representation, the kneeling Virgin and Joseph in the cave,[15] goes back to a western model, which circulated through engravings and was widely used in Orthodox painting in the Balkans, particularly in the 18th, though also the 19th century. It is found in a series of engravings, such as one by Zefarović in 1751,[16] another dated 1761,[17] in one engraved on Mount Athos in 1817, which reproduces the closest iconographic type,[18] in an engraving from the middle of the 19th century,[19] and in works dated 1867[20] and 1868[21] by Konstantinos Kaldis, the engraver from Lesbos, who, as has been noted, copied earlier models.[22]

The same iconographic type of the Nativity, with Joseph and Mary kneeling inside the cave, can also be seen in portable icons of the 18th and early 19th century in the general area of Macedonia.[23]

The icon, which has the inscription *ΕΤΟΥC 1770 ΧΕΙΡ ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ* ('in the year 1770, hand of Konstantinos') forms a perfectly constructed, charming composition, an example of the fine art of the painter Konstantinos of Korcë.

Unpublished

1. Tsigaras 2003, 50-51.
2. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, nos. 61, 63-68.
3. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, no. 31
4. For its activity on Mount Athos, in particular, see Tsigaras 2003.
5. See cat. no. 59.
6. See cat. no. 60.
7. See Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 225-226, with bibliography. Tsigaras 2003, 304, 306.
8. See Chatzidakis 1987, 286. Tsigaras 2003, 306. See also Caca 2002, 206. Drishti 2003, no. 44.
9. E.g. Antigoni Panteli Zographou, see Tsigaras 2003, 305, note 29.
10. Millet - Pargoire - Petit 1904, 96-97. For the painters' activity see Chatzidakis 1987, 157-158. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 135-136. Caca 2002. Tsigaras 2003. Drakopoulou 2003. Kirchainer 2003-2004. Parcharidou - Tsigaras - Kommatas 2005. Popovska-Korobar 2005, 73-85.
11. Polyviou 1999, 107-108. Tsigaras 2003, 45-50.
12. See Chatzidakis 1987, 178-179.
13. See Mihajlovski 1993. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 135-136. Gergova 1999. Tsigaras 2003, 56. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, nos. 61-68.
14. See Tsigaras 2003, 90-91, figs. 36, 37.
15. See an icon of the Nativity dated 1638 in the Byzantine Museum in Athens (Acheimastou-Potamianou 1998, no. 70).
16. Davidov 1978, fig. 64.
17. Davidov 1978, fig. 351.
18 Davidov 2004, 204.
19. Tomov 1978, fig. 61 (Anastase Karastoyanov, engraver).
20. Papastratou 1986, no. 18.
21. Papastratou 1986, 499.
22. Papastratou 1986, 49.
23. Popovska-Korobar 2005, 152.



50. The Last Supper

55 x 43 cm.
Inv. no. IN 5335
Provenance: Metropolitan church of the Zoodochos Pege, Korcë
Date: 1770
Painter: Konstantinos of Korcë (attributed)

The Last Supper is one of the Dodekaorton icons that adorned the metropolitan church of the Zoodochos Pege, Korcë.

The central figure, Christ, who sits tranquilly at the middle of the table, surrounded by the twelve disciples seated on low benches, appears to be speaking animatedly.

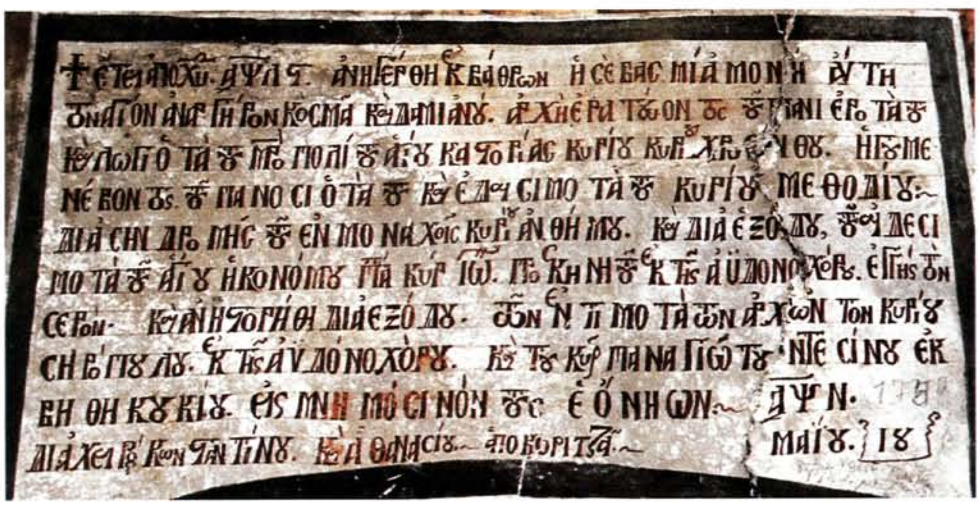
The large oval table that dominates the composition, laden with vessels, food, fruit and vegetables, is characteristic of the same representation by the painters in the Philotheou and Xiropotamou Monasteries, in the church of Saints Peter and Paul at Bithkuk, and in the *skete* of the Xenophontos Monastery.[1] In the background, the portico with three apses and the figure of the young servant seen through the door reveal the painter's aspiration towards earlier, select models. The two large lamps that light the room, the decoration of the benches, and the large pitcher covered with cloth, allude to elements of contemporary daily life.

The balanced representation reveals a painter experienced in both composition and execution, though a certain unevenness can be detected in the modelling of the faces, some of which are executed more carefully than others, and in the drapers, which is more fully worked in some of the figures of apostles and more summarily treated in others.

Although a crack has destroyed the date at the bottom of the icon, where the word *ETOC* ('year') can be made out, this icon can be dated accurately to 1770 and attributed to the hand of Konstantinos, since it is directly associated with his style and also because its dimensions connect it with the same group of Dodekaorton icons as the signed and dated icon of the Nativity.[2]

Unpublished

1. See Tsigaras 2003, 136-137.
2. See cat. no. 49.

1


2


1. Founder's inscription with the signature of the painters in the cemetery church of Saints Kosmas and Damian at Vithkuk.

2. The Last Supper, wall-painting in the katholikon of the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul at Vithkuk.


ΔΕΙΠΝΟΣ Ο ΜΥΣΤΙΚΟΣ
IC XC

51. Pentecost

54.4 x 44.3 x 3.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 5331
Provenance: Metropolitan church of the Zoodochos Pege, Korcë
Date: 1770
Painter: Konstantinos of Korcë (attributed)

The descent to the apostles of the Holy Spirit, who had announced Christ's Ascension to them, took place in Jerusalem, in the house in which they had gathered to pray. This icon of Pentecost, which follows the iconography of the established type, with the disciples arranged in a semicircle, is of interest on account of the strong presence of the Virgin amongst the apostles, which is not explicitly stated in the New Testament. In Post-Byzantine painting, the Virgin's presence is probably connected with western models, since in western theology she symbolises the Church and is therefore included in the depiction of Pentecost.

In the sky is a semicircular bright cloud with the Holy Spirit, from which tongues of fire descend to the heads of the disciples and the Virgin. Beneath the *synthronon*, the personification of the Univers is projected in the dark void, personified as an aged king "holding a kerchief before him in both hands, and with twelve rolled papers in the kerchief", according to the *Painter's Manual*,[1] symbolising the preaching of the disciples to all nations.

Precisely the same iconographic type, which goes back to Cretan models, is found in wall-paintings executed by painters from Korcë in the *skete* of Saint Anna in 1757, in the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul at Bithkuk in 1764, and in the Xenophontos Monastery in 1766.[2]

The icon is dated by the inscription *ΕΠΙ ΕΤΟΥC 1777 ΜΑΙΟΥ 12* ('in the year 1770, May 12'), and is attributed to the painter Konstantinos, who also painted the other icons in the same Dodekaorton.[3]

Unpublished

1. Dionysios of Fournas, 113.
2. Tsigaras 2003, 101, fig. 53.
3. See cat. no. 49.



Pentecost, wall-painting in the katholikon of the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul at Vithkuk.



52. The Virgin the Unfading Rose with scenes and saints

62 x 42
Inv. no. KO 1984
Provenance: Metropolitan church of the Zoodochos Pege, Korcë
Date: 1773
Painter: Konstantinos of Korcë (?)

The composition of the icon, with a central subject surrounded by twelve representations distributed in five zones, recalls engravings that circulated widely in the 18th and 19th century.[1] In the centre, the Virgin, enthroned and holding the infant Christ, wears royal robes and a crown and holds a sceptre. In her right hand she has stylised roses and with her left she restrains the infant Christ, who is also dressed in royal raiment, wears a crown, and holds a sceptre and a globe of the world. The representation of the Virgin and Christ, crowned and wearing royal garments, and the heavy wooden baroque throne, are often found in engravings.[2]

In the top zone, which is divided into three panels, are depictions of the Holy Trinity, in the familiar iconographic type derived from engravings, which is often repeated in the work of painters from Korcë,[3] Saints John the Baptist, Nicholas and Spyridon, and the three Hierarchs. In the following zone is the Synaxis of the Apostles and the Archangels in the familiar iconographic types, while the two narrower zones at the sides contain (left side) busts of Saint Marina, Theodosios the *Koinobiarches*, teacher of the monastic republic, the Saints Kosmas and Damianos, between whom is the figure of a 'young, black-bearded' saint holding a martyr's cross. He is probably Saint Thallelaios, a healing saint frequently chosen for the icons and iconographic programmes of the painters from Korcë.[4] At the right side Saints Catherine and Barbara are depicted wearing royal robes, and Saint Stylianos holding a young child because, as his open scroll proclaims: *ΠΕΔΟΝ ΦΙΛΑΞ ΠΕΦΗΚΕΝ Χ(ΡΙCΤΟ)Υ το δορον* ('he became the protector of children, a gift from Christ'). He is followed by Saint Modestos, wearing bishop's vestments, who, as patron saint of stock-raisers, was very popular with the people of the area, and his prayer was read "at every fatal animal disease". In the bottom zone of the icon are full-length depictions of Saints Demetrios and Charalambis, treading on the plague, a dark demonic figure holding a chain and sickle.[5] In the centre of the bottom zone is an interesting representation accompanied by the inscription: *ΟΙ ΑΓΙΟΙ ΕΠΤΑΡΙΘΜΗ* ('the Seven Saints'). These are the two brothers from Thessaloniki, Cyril and Methodius, who enlightened the Slavs and their five disciples. Cyril, Methodius and Clement are shown as prelates wearing richly decorated vestments. Cyril and Methodius's pupil, Saint Naum, founder of the monastery named after him at Ohrid, a model of which he holds, is depicted wearing monk's garb, as, too, are Saints Gorazd, Angelarios and Savvas. The earliest depiction of these saints has been located in the narthex of the Monastery of the Virgin at Slimica in the Prespa area, and dates from 1612.[6] The iconographic type, with Saint Methodius in the centre holding a model of a church, as in the wall-painting of 1735 in the church of Saint Nicholas at the village of Draca in Kragujevac, was formulated in the early 18th century in spiritual circles of Ohrid.[7] The painters of Korcë also depicted the seven saints in a wall-painting in the Ardenicë Monastery, and Terpos, son of the senior painter, Konstantinos, repeated the representation in a wall-painting in the monastery of Hosios Naum at Ohrid in 1800.[8] The final scene in the icon depicts Saint Alypios –an idiorrhythmic hermit 'who lived on a column for fifty-three years'– Saint Demetrios and Saint Dionysios of Olympos, a miracle-worker and founder of the Monastery of the Holy Trinity on Mount Olympos, who was very popular throughout Macedonia.

On the legs of the Virgin's throne is painted an inscription with white lettering: *ΔΕΗCΙC ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ ΑΝΑΓΝΟCΤΗC ΧΡΙCΤΟC* ('prayer of the servant of God Anagnostis







Christos') and the date *1773 ΝΟΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ 17* ('1773 November 17').

In 1770-71, the painter Konstantinos, to whom is attributed the icon, carried out a commission for the twelve scenes of the Dodekaorton for the church of the Zoodochos Pege in Korcë.[9] The features of Konstantinos's style can be recognised in this icon in the facial characteristics and the decoration of the clothing. Nevertheless, some slight differences that reveal a certain roughness or haste in the workmanship suggest that an assistant in the workshop of the Korcë painters had a hand in the execution of the icon.

Unpublished

1. See the examples in Papastratou 1986, nos. 105, 119-121, 492, 499, 505.
2. See Papastratou 1986, 131-142.
3. See cat. no. 48.
4. See cat. no. 57.
5. For depictions of the plague see cat. no. 61.
6. See Grozdanov 1983, 113-116.
7. See Grozdanov 1983, 118.
8. See Grozdanov 1983, 121.
9. See cat. no. 49.



The Seven Saints, wall-painting in the katholikon of the Monastery of the Virgin, Ardenicë .





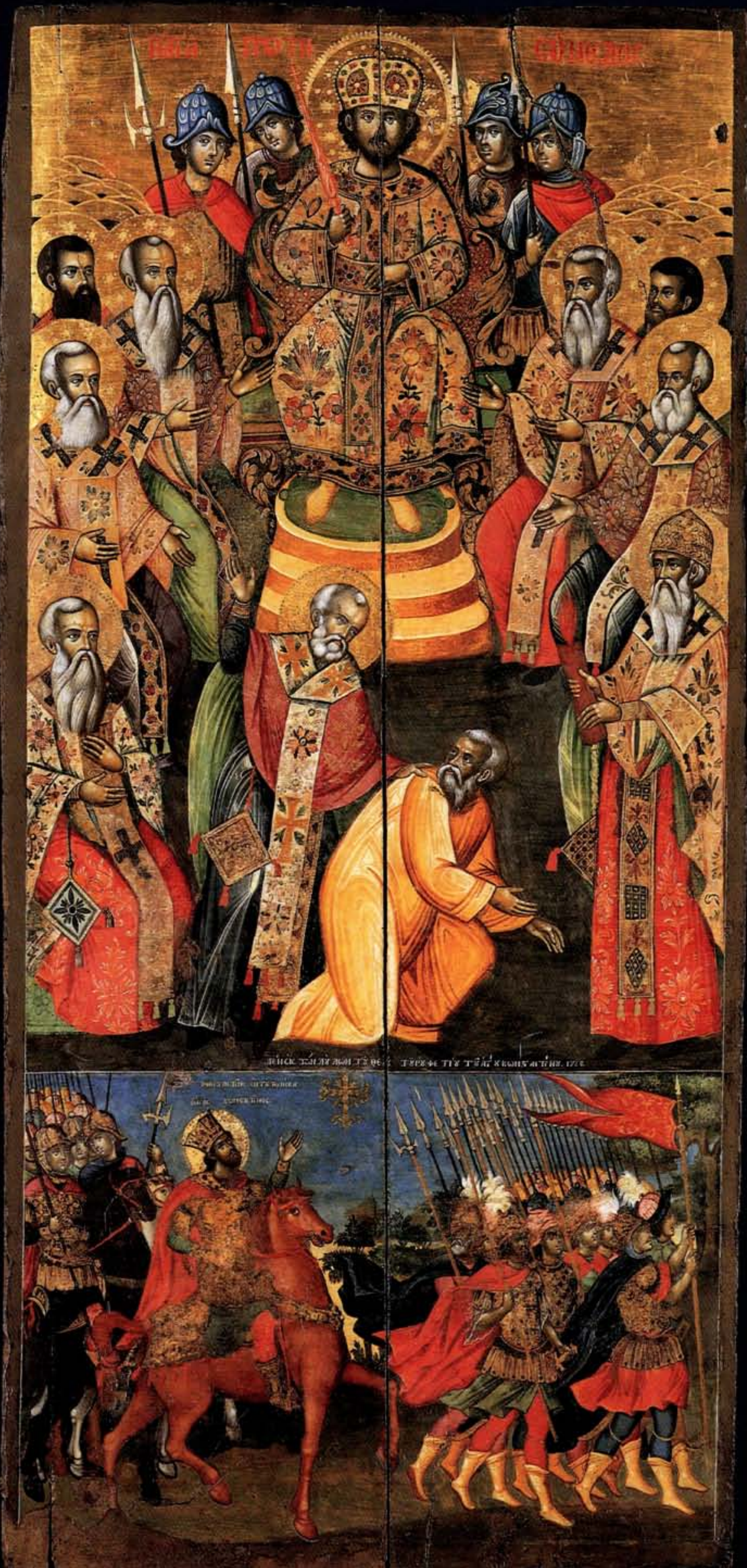
53. First Ecumenical Council and The battle of the Mulvian Bridge ('In this conquer')

182.5 x 73.5 x 3.5 cm.
Inv. no. 2623
Provenance: Metropolitan church of the Zoodochos Pege, Korcë
Date: 1765
Painter: Athanasios of Korcë (attributed)

In the year 1765, the guild of the town of Korcë, known as the *roufeti of Saint Constantine*, commissioned an icon of large dimensions for the town church. The icon remained in the same church until its transfer to the Museum of Korcë. The commission was placed by the professional guild with a recognised painter in order to honour Saint Constantine, the patron saint of the guild.[1] It therefore combines two episodes from the life of the emperor who laid the foundations of Christianity: the First Ecumenical Council and the Vision of the Cross at the Mulvian Bridge.

In addition to its value as historical evidence, the icon is at the same time an excellent example of the way in which the famous painters of Korcë worked, both for the charming impression it makes on the very first viewing, in a baroque atmosphere, and for the combination of two different painting trends –one faithful to the Byzantine tradition in the upper zone, and a westernising trend in the lower zone.

The upper zone, which bears the inscription *Η ΑΓΙΑ ΠΡΩΤΗ CΥΝΟΔΟC* ('The holy first council') has a rather summary depiction of the First Ecumenical Council, which took place in Nikaia, Bithynia, in AD 325, in the presence of 318 church fathers, and at which the first seven articles of the Creed were formulated. The Council was held during the reign of the emperor Constantine, with the aim of dealing with the heresy of Arius. At the centre of the representation is the dominating figure of Constantine the




ΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΕ ΕΝ ΤΟΥΤΩ ΝΙΚΑ.
Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΣ.



Great, enthroned and on a pedestal, wearing a crown and holding the royal sceptre, attended by four soldiers. To right and left of the emperor sit the church fathers. In the foreground is depicted the episode of Saint Nikolaos and Arius. The saint hold's Arius by the shoulder and prepares to strike him. At the right, Saint Spyridon, standing, holds the tile, from which fire and water issue, elements which, along with earth, demonstrated to Arius the tripartite nature of God.

In the lower zone of the icon, which bears the inscription *ΚΩΝCTANTINE EN TOYTΩ NIKA* ('Constantine in this conquer'), the Roman emperor, mounted on horseback and wearing a luxurious military uniform, raises his gaze to the heavens and sees the bright cross of victory. He is followed by military saints and preceded by a band of foot-soldiers carrying a standard. The subject, which is rare in Byzantine iconography,[2] depicts the moment at which Constantine, on his way to fight Maxentius at the Mulvian Bridge over the Tiber, saw a vision of the cross and went on to be victorious and lay the foundations of Christianity.

The same representation in the *lite* of the katholikon of the Xiropotamou Monastery, dating from 1783[3] and executed by the painters Konstantinos and Athanasios, is a characteristic example of the way the two brothers worked: using the same pricked cartoons, they rendered the representations in accordance with their own artistic ability and preferences. In the wall-painting in the Xiropotamou Monastery, the same iconographic model is clearly used for the arrangement of the figures –the similarity of the cross is characteristic– but it is executed in a completely different style. The conservative choices in the Xiropotamou wall-painting are owed to the older brother, Konstantinos, while the naturalistic style, clearly influenced by western models, of the representation of Constantine's vision in the present icon, is associat-

ed with the bolder hand of his younger brother Athanasios.

In carrying out the commission from the guild of Saint Constantine, the gifted painter moved between two different painting manners in the same icon. In the scene of the Ecumenical Council, the figures are static and conform completely to the Byzantine iconographic tradition. The heavy throne and garments embroidered with floral motifs fall within the baroque style, while the influence of engravings is evident in the stance of Saint Constantine and the pedestal on which he stands.[4]

Impressive features of the representation in the lower zone are the movement and lively stride of the soldiers, with their cloaks billowing out, the strong colours and detailed workmanship of their panoplies, hats, and the lacy material of their sleeves. These elements, together with the naturalistic landscape, are associated with western models, mainly drawn from engravings, which were widely used by the present painter. The work is directly connected with icons by Athanasios in the church of the Annunciation at Tiranë,[5] with regard to the stylistic choices, the facial features, the modelling, the colour scales, and even the lettering of the inscriptions. Eleven years later, in 1776, the same painter executed the icon of All Saints[6] for the same metropolitan church of Korcë, and in the meantime, in 1770, his brother Konstantinos painted the icons of the Dodekaorton.[7]

At the bottom of the representation of the Ecumenical Council is the inscription *ΔΕΗCIC ΤΩΝ ΔΟΥΛΩΝ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΡΟΥΦΕΤΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΚΩΝCTANTINOY* ('supplication of the servant of God of the guild of Saint Constantine') and the year 1765 –historical testimony to the presence in Korcë of the guild of Saint Constantine, which, in keeping with the practice of the period, dedicated the icon of its patron saint in the metropolitan church of the town.

Unpublished

1. In the town of Serres an icon of Saints Constantine and Helen dating from 1864 is dedicated by the guild of the *deprelides mastoroi* (masons). See Bonovas 1998, 204.
2. Vasilaki 1987.
3. See Tsigaras 2003, 271, fig. 291.
4. The stance, and especially the pedestal, recall engravings depicting the Judgement of Christ (see Papastratou 1986, 60ff).
5. See cat. nos. 54-58. For the painter see cat. no. 59.
6. Cat. no. 59.
7. See cat. nos. 49-51.

54. The Annunciation

40.7 x 29.6 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3786
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation to the Virgin, Tiranë
Date: About 1760-1780
Painter: Athanasios of Korcë (attributed)

The exhibition includes five icons from the church of the Annunciation in Tiranë, all of which have the same dimensions and are distinguished by their westernising style, charming colours, baroque atmosphere and meticulous execution. On the back, they all have inscriptions stating their subject, correctly spelled and written in the same fine lettering that accompanies the representations. I attribute all five to Athanasios, the younger brother of the painters from Korcë and assign them to the twenty years of his artistic activity between 1760 and 1780.[1]

The icon of the Annunciation is a typical example of the painter's weakness for western models and for the heavy decorative style of baroque. The Virgin sits on a carved baroque throne. On the table next to her, with its richly embroidered cover, is an open bible in which can be seen the inscription: *ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη κυρίου γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμα σου* ('behold they servant, Lord, let it be done to me according to thy word'). The angel, his bright garments billowing behind, stands on a cloud and descends from the left with a pronounced, almost choreographic movement, holding a lily in one hand and pointing with the other to a white dove. The lavish bed curtain, beneath a ciborium,[2] the luxurious, heavy fabrics and the lacy materials all reveal the painter's fondness for rich decoration.

On the balcony of the tallest of the buildings in the background stand the prophets David and Solomon, who frequently accompany representations of the Annunciation. On David's



scroll can be read: ἄκουσον θύγατερ καὶ ἴδε καὶ κλῖνον τὸ οὖς σου ('Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear')[3] and on that of Solomon: πολλαὶ θυγατέρες ἐποίησαν δύναμιν ('Many daughters have done virtuously')[4]

The iconographic type of the main representation of the icon, with the mannerist trends in its movement, comes from engravings and may be traced, for example, in an engraving of 1752, drawn by Christofor Zefarović.[5] The same representation is also to be found in later engravings, such as one executed in Venice in 1817 by the Italian engraver Ignazio Colombo[6] or one engraved in 1842 on Mount Athos,[7] which presumably reproduce earlier models. This particular iconographic type of the angel, with his distinctly mannerist movement, seems also to have been preferred by Post-Byzantine painters, since it is also found in the pricked cartoons of painters from Chionades in Epiros in the middle of the 19th century.[8]

Unpublished

1. For the painter see cat. no. 59.
2. Similar ciboria covering the bed were reproduced in many western engravings and were transferred to icons of various periods. See, for example, icons of the 17th century (Rigopoulos 1979, pl. 33, fig. 36 and fig. 174), an engraving of 1799 (Davidov 1978, no. 411) and one of 1817 (Papastratou 1986, no. 139).
3. *καὶ ἐπιλάθου τοῦ λαοῦ σου* ('forget also thine own people') (Psalm 45, 10).
4. *Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all* (Proverbs 31, 29).
5. Davidov 1978, fig. 74.
6. Papastratou 1986, no. 144.
7. Davidov 2004, 177.
8. *Εκ Χιονάδων σπουδές και ανθίβολα* 2004, no. 8.

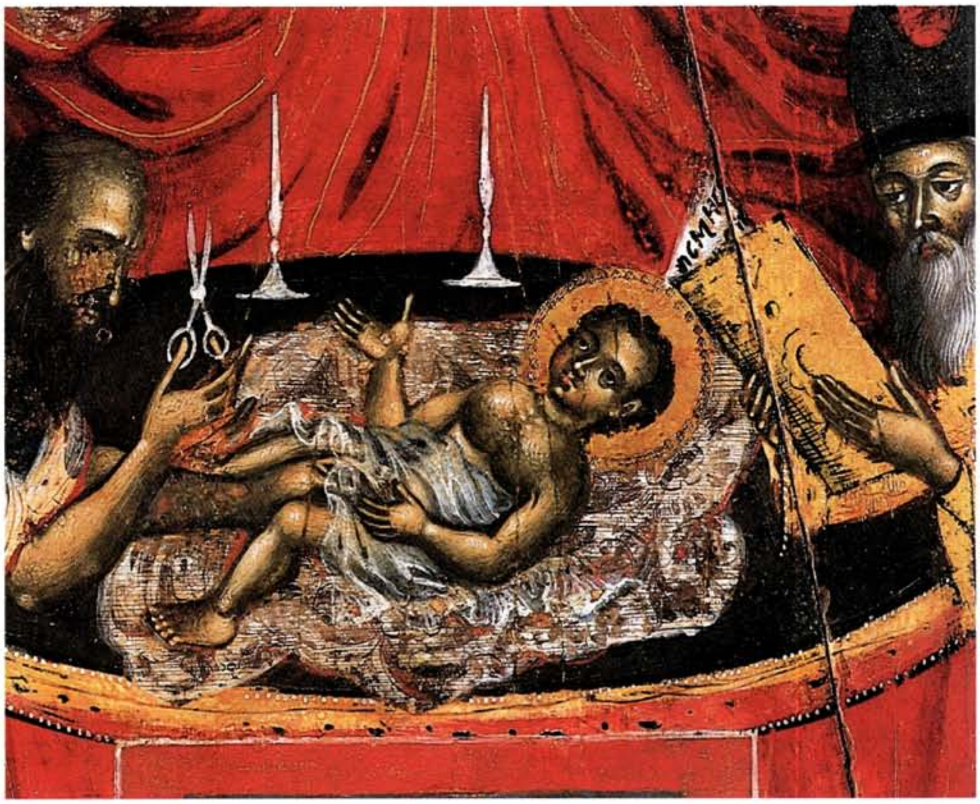
55. Circumcision of Christ

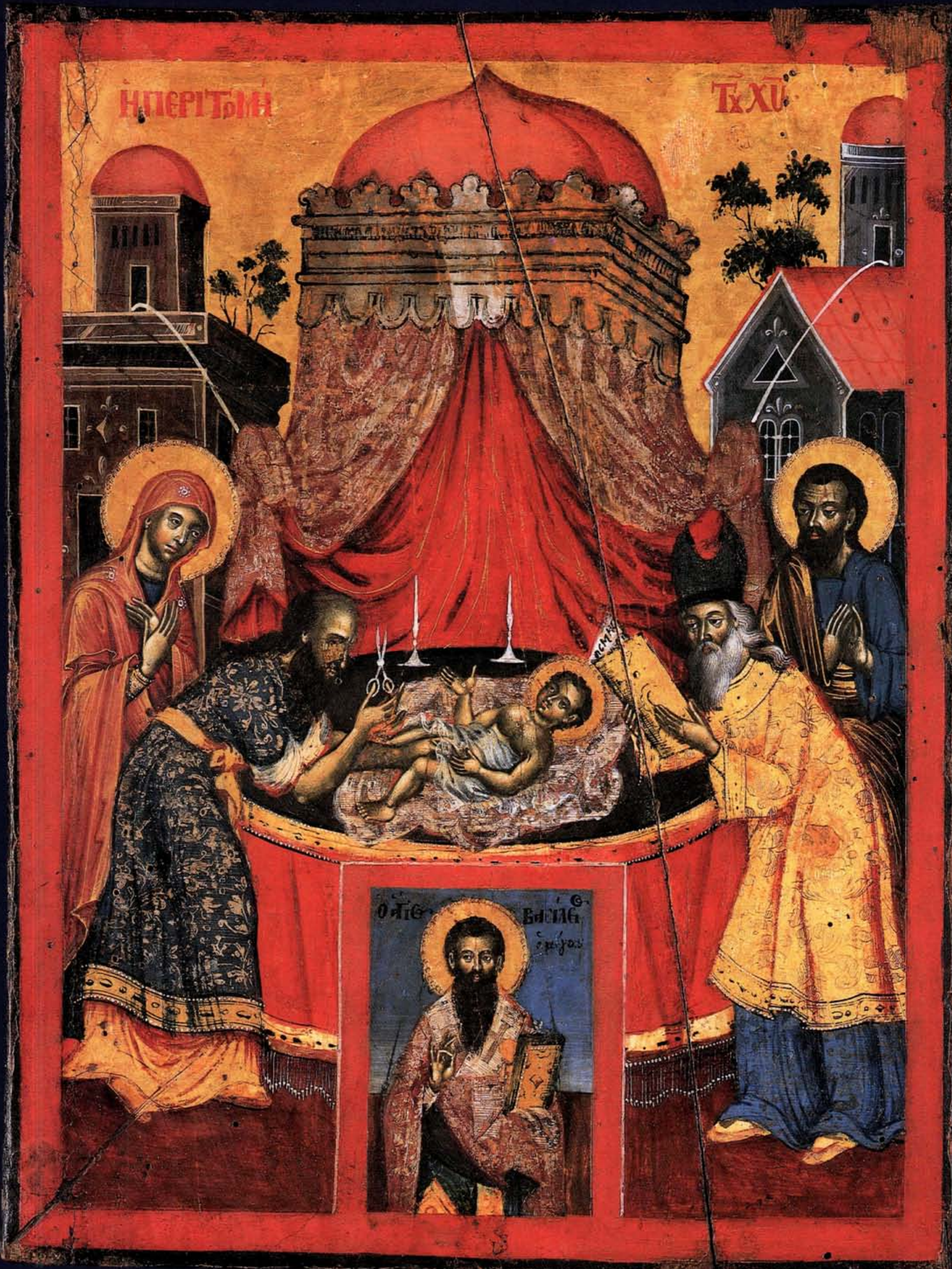
40.6 x 31 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3788
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation to the Virgin, Tiranë
Date: About 1760-1780
Painter: Athanasios of Korcë (attributed)

The Circumcision of Christ is not depicted very often in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine painting, and is not included amongst the Twelve Great Feasts. According to the Gospel of Saint Luke (2, 21), Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple when he was eight months old to have him circumcised and named. In the Orthodox Church, the Circumcision is celebrated on 1 January, together with the memory of Basil the Great, which accounts for the depiction in the present icon of Saint Basil, who often accompanies the Circumcision in both earlier[1] and later works.[2]

In the icon from the church of the Annunciation at Tiranë, the painter followed a westernising model presumably derived from an engraving, as in the other works in the same church.[3] The representation is dominated by the ciborium with its rich curtain and decoration, and also by the round altar with its gold-embroidered cover, on which Christ lies, enveloped in a lacy fabric. The luxurious garments worn by the priests contrast with the plain appearance of Joseph and Mary, who are standing nearby. The predominant colour in the representation is red, contrasting with the gold-yellow used for the background, clothes and haloes. Equally impressive are the meticulous workmanship in the luxurious garments and diaphanous fabrics, and the naturalistic rendering of objects such as the scissors in the hands of the priest.[4]

The iconography of the same representation executed by the same painters from Korcë in the *kyriakon* of the *skete* of Saint Anna and




Η ΠΕΡΙΤΟΜΗ

in the chapel of the Archangels in the Xiropotamou Monastery[5] is completely different from the present icon and follows Byzantine models. In the present icon, which I attribute, along with the others in the same ensemble,[6] to the youngest of the Korcë painters, Athanasios, the painter again reveals his preference for westernising models and his ability to reproduce them with considerable originality and craftsmanship.

Unpublished

1. The representation of Saint Basil along with the Circumcision is also found in other icons, such as the icon by Emmanuel Tzanes in the Hellenic Institute in Venice, where the Circumcision takes the form of a miniature representation on the saint's *epigonation* (Drandakis 1962, 63-69. Chatzidakis 1962, no. 111). Also in an icon also in the Hellenic Institute in Venice attributed by M. Chatzidakis to Emmanuel Tzanfournaris (Chatzidakis 1962, nos. 65, 97-97, pl. 48).
2. Karakatsani 1980, no. 198.
3. See cat. nos. 54, 56-58.
4. The priest also holds a pair of scissors instead of the more usual knife in a later icon in the Tsakyroglou Collection (see note 2).
5. See Tsigaras 2003, 103, fig. 56. A summary version of the Circumcision with the main figures is to be found in an engraving of 1761 (Davidov 1978, fig. 352).
6. For the painter see cat. no. 59.

56. The Descent into Hell

41.5 x 31 x 3.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3755
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation to the Virgin, Tiranë
Date: About 1760-1780
Painter: Athanasios of Korcë (attributed)

This icon belongs to the ensemble of paintings from the church of the Annunciation in Tiranë. In it is depicted Christ's triumphal descent into Hell to save the human race from the 'original sin'.

Christ, the central figure in the composition, is shown in pronounced movement, his red cloak billowing behind, pulling Adam from the tomb with one hand. In his raised left hand he holds a spear, with the point of which he destroys the shackles of death, breaking the chains at the bottom of the icon. From the cross of victory at its top billows a red banner. Behind Christ's glory, four angels wearing white chitons and gold-red cloaks hold torches, while John the Baptist makes supplication at his side. Around the Saviour are Eve, in supplication, prophets, kings and groups of the just. Beneath the broken gates of Hell, is Satan, fire emerging from his horned head, and his arms bound with chains to the two sarcophagi.

The Descent into Hell is depicted in this icon in a different manner from other, similar representations executed by the Korcë painters in wall paintings.[1] The facial characteristics, choice of colour, and above all the clear derivation from western models –presumably derived from engravings[2]– suggest that the icon should be attributed to the painter Athanasios of Korcë.[3]

Unpublished

1. See Tsigaras 2003, 150-151.
2. Similar stance of Christ in an engraving of 1751 by Christofor Zefarović in Vienna (Papastratou 1986 no. 45), and also in a small scene in an engraving of 1870 (Papastratou nos. 570, 571).
3. For the painter see cat. no. 59.



57. Saints John Vladimir and Thallelaios

40.8 x 30 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3803
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation to the Virgin, Tiranë
Date: About 1760-1780
Painter: Athanasios of Korcë (attributed)

The ensemble from the church of the Annunciation in Tiranë includes a quite badly damaged icon of Saints Vladimir and Thallelaios. The two saints are depicted full-length, standing on a pedestal amongst low trees, rendered naturalistically in the blue colour of the background, in an attempt to render perspective.

Saint Vladimir was widely venerated in Orthodox Albania, in the general area of Ohrid, in Bulgaria, Hungary, and also on Sinai. The monastery named after him in Elbasan also housed his relic, but it was destroyed on 14 March 1944.[1] The saint was descended from a royal family of Dalmatia, lived in the late 10th-early 11th century, was distinguished by his great piety, and was murdered by his wife's brother as he returned from a victorious campaign against the Byzantine emperor.[2] He is depicted here wearing royal raiment and a crown, and holding his severed head. The painter faithfully follows the iconographic type, which circulated widely in engravings by Christofor Zefarović in the *Stemmatographia*, a Serbian book printed in Venice in 1741,[3] and in an engraving of 1742, also from a drawing by Zefarović, which also contained scenes from the saint's life.[4]

The young martyr Thallelaios, a doctor by profession, came from Lebanon and lived in the 3rd century AD. His dress and stance, and especially the highly mobile, soft drapery of his red *himation*, and the doctor's vase in his hand, allude to western models, presumably derived from engravings, which were often followed by the painter Athanasios.[5]

The two saints were popular in the area of Albania and Macedonia and were frequently included in the iconographic programmes of painters from Korcë. In the Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos,[6] the saints are depicted together, but their stance and dress remain more faithful to Byzantine models.[7]

Unpublished

1. See Tsigaras 2003, 207.
2. See cat. no. 47.
3. Grozdanov 1983, fig. 87.
4. Davidov 1978, nos. 32, 259ff. See also Papastratou 1986, 241.
5. For the painter see cat. no. 59.
6. Tsigaras 2003, fig. 182.
7. The depiction of Saint Vladimir in the Philotheou Monastery probably follows an engraving by Isabella Piccini from the *Akolouthia* of the saint, printed in Venice in 1690 (Papastratou 1986, 242, fig. 2).



Saint John Vladimir, wall-painting in the Philotheou Monastery.







58. Saints Savvas, John Damaskinos and Barbara

41 x 31.3 x 2.6 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3815
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation to the Virgin, Tiranë
Date: About 1760-1780
Painter: Athanasios of Korcë (attributed)

According to the Orthodox church calendar, the memory of the saints in the icon, Savvas, John Damaskinos and Barbara, is honoured on 4 and 5 December. They are depicted full-length and frontally in a manner recalling paintings of a severe tradition.

Saint Savvas the Sanctified (439-532), whose feast day is 5 December, was a hermit from Kappadokia who was very active in Palestine, where he founded the monastery named after him. He is depicted as an old man wearing monk's garb and holding a rosary and a scroll with the inscription: *ὅστις σῶμα ἐνίκησεν οὗτος φύσιν ἐνίκησεν, ὁ δὲ φύσιν νικήσας πάντως ὑπὲρ φύσιν ἐγένετο* ('whoever has conquered the body has conquered nature, and he who has conquered nature has risen above nature'), from John Climacus.[1]

Saint John Damaskinos, who celebrates the same feast day as Saint Barbara on 4 December, was a great theologian of the 8th century, born in Damascus of an eminent Greek-Syrian family. One of the finest poets of the Eastern Church, he introduced the poetic genre of the canon, thereby making a decisive construction to the formation of Byzantine music. In Byzantine and Post-Byzantine art he is depicted wearing a monk's garb and a turban on his head. Here he holds an open book with a finely written and correctly spelled inscription, quoting an extract from the *Parakletike*:[2] *Μίαν τρισυπόστατον ἀρχήν, τὰ σεραφὶμ ἀσιγήτως δοξάζουσι, ἄναρχον ἀΐδιον ποιητικὴν ὡς αἰτίαν, ἀκατάληπτον, ἣν καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα, πιστῶς γεραίρει τοῖς ᾄσμασιν* ('the seraphim, incessantly glorify a triune power, an eternal, without beginning creator cause, incomprehensive, whom every tongue praised faithfully with songs').

Saint Barbara the great martyr, who lived at the time of Maximianus (286-305) was the daughter of a pagan and met a martyr's death at the hand of her own father because she embraced Christianity. In the present icon she is depicted wearing a crown, with a red chiton sparsely decorated at the hem, a garment with an embroidered floral motif and decoration at the sides and neck, and a richly decorated cloak, holding the cross of her martyrdom and a palm branch –a manner that goes back to engravings of the period and recalls similar representations of Saint Catherine and Saint Kyriake.[3]

The date 1829 at the bottom of the icon is a later addition, since both the iconographic models and the execution of the icon, particularly the facial characteristics, the modelling of the face, and the decorative elements assign it to the works produced by Athanasios, the painter from Korcë, who was active between 1760 and 1780, on the evidence of his signed, dated paintings.[4]

Unpublished

1. The same passage from John Climacus is found on the saint's scroll in an engraving of 1847 (Papastratou 1986, 524, no. 558).
2. *Παρακλητική*, 9.
3. See Papastratou 1986, no. 371, an engraving of 1837, 241, fig. 2 and no. 404. See also a later engraving (1859) in which Saint Kyriake is depicted in the iconographic type of Saint Barbara (Papastratou 1986, no. 276).
4. For the painter see cat. no. 59.


1829

59. All Saints

37 x 31.5 x 2 cm.
Inv. no. IN 829
Provenance: Metropolitan church of Zoodochos Pege, Korcë
Date: 1776
Painter: Athanasios of Korcë

The meaning of the representation of All Saints lies in the mediation of the saints for the salvation of the living and the dead at the Last Judgement. The inscription on the scrolls of the angels in this icon is to be interpreted in this sense, as the expectation of salvation by the faithful: *ΧΑΙΡΕΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΑΓΑΛΛΙΑCΘΕ ΟΤΙ Ο ΜΙCΘΟC ΥΜΩΝ ΠΟΛΥC ΕΝ ΤΟΙC ΟΥΡΑΝΟΙC* ('Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven').[1] This passage, connected with the rewarding of Christians in the kingdom of heaven, follows references to the blessed, *they that mourn, the meek, the merciful, they which do hunger*, in Christ's Sermon on the Mount.

This is the only icon in the catalogue signed by the painter Athanasios of Korcë, dated 1776.

Athanasios of Korcë worked with his brother Konstantinos on a series of monuments, mainly in Korcë, Voskopojë, Vithkuk and Mount Athos, from 1736 to 1783,[2] executing the wall-painted decoration for about fifteen monuments. Together with his son, the painter Naum,[3] he painted the now destroyed church of the Virgin at Kleinovo in 1780. Three years later, when these three painters were working on the wall-paintings of the Xiropotamou Monastery, references in the physician's account, preserved in the Monastery archives, suggest that Athanasios fell serious ill, and may have died in this year.[4]

The composition, with the band of All Saints, stands out at once for its similarity to western models, and is characteristic of the painter's practice of reproducing engravings, the subject of which he develops in a completely different manner from his brother and collaborator Konstantinos on an icon with the same subject.[5]

At the centre of the composition is a representation found exclusively in western iconography. The Virgin, seated, holds the infant Christ standing in her arms, dressed in white, while the young Saint John the Baptist stands next to her and embraces Christ. This is a very popular subject in western art, common amongst the painters of the Italian Renaissance and Mannerism,[6] and was widely reproduced in engravings,[7] which were presumably the source of inspiration for the present painter.

The Ancient of Days blesses from the clouds, where *putti* hover, and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descends to the Mother of God, who is flanked by evangelists, apostles and saints. In the lower zone is the choir of Christian hierarchs and saints, a special position amongst whom is occupied by Saints Constantine and Helen, wearing royal robes. In the centre next to Saint Constantine is depicted an old man with a full beard, a supreme figure of the ecclesiastical hierarchy wearing a mitre and *enkolpion* and holding a pastoral staff. He is probably Saint Athanasios, patriarch of Alexandria, who attended the First Ecumenical Council and was the only one to celebrate wearing the mitre.

At the bottom of the icon is a scene of Paradise, with the good robber and Adam and Eve reclining in an idyllic, naturalistically rendered landscape.

The icon is dominated by the dark green colour in the flesh of the faces and the dark background, against which the vivid reds and pinks of the luxurious garments and the gold on the haloes stand out even more vividly. As in his other works, the painter follows western



1776

models for the composition and execution, and attempts to render light movement and soft drapery in some of the figures, such as those of Saints Constantine and Helen, who contrast with the static figures of the hierarchs. In the modelling of the faces, however, and particularly in their ethos, he remains true to the Orthodox painting of the period. His efforts to give the figures physical beauty and a certain sweetness are limited and not particularly successful.

At the right edge, the painter signs his name *Χειρ ΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΥ 1776* ('the hand of Athanasios in 1776'). The work betrays his familiarity with western painting, by way of engravings, and also the acceptance, if not the desire of the Orthodox faithful of the region, for western artistic manners.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Trésors d'art albanais 1993, no. 62.

1. Matthew 5, 12.
2. See Chatzidakis 1987, 157-158 and cat. no. 49, note 10.
3. See cat. no. 49, note 7.
4. Tsigaras 2003, 301, 303.
5. See cat. no. 48. For the subject of All Saints see Velmans 1983.
6. The same subject is found, for examples, in paintings by Raphael, Pintoricchio and Michelangelo (see *Raphael* 2004 figs. 24, 26, 27, and figs. pp. 79, 253, 257.
7. See engravings by Andrea Schiavone, a Venetian mannerist painter, for the composition *Holy Conversation*, in which the infant Christ stoops from the Virgin's arms to kiss the young John the Baptist, and an engraving by Bonasone (*Ο Γκρέκο στην Ιταλία* 1995, 208).





60. Virgin enthroned and Child

77 x 47 x 3.5 cm.
Inv. no. 6521
Provenance: Church of the Theotokos, village of Benje, Përmet
Date: 1787
Painter: Terpos

This icon of the Virgin enthroned is signed by Terpos, son of Konstantinos and apprentice in the 18th-century workshop of Korcë painters.[1] During the many years of his artistic activity (1782-1819),[2] he executed the wall-paintings of churches in Berat, Voskopojë, Përmet and Ohrid, where he signed: *διὰ χειρὸς ἐμοῦ Τέρπου ζωγράφου υἱοῦ Κωνσταντίνου ζωγράφου ἐκ Κορυτσᾶς* ('by my hand, Terpos the painter, son of Konstantinos the painter from Korcë') in the church of Saint Naum.[3]
Terpos, equipped with his apprenticeship in the family workshop and the pricked cartoons of his painter father, and despite his only moderate artistic achievements, painted an icon of the Virgin distinguished by the rich decoration on the throne and garments. The head is small for the body, however, betraying a certain clumsiness on the part of the painter. The Virgin's stance, which culminates in her protectively holding Christ's left shoulder, is to be found in engravings of the period.[4]
The faces in the icon are softly modelled in light colours, with red on the cheeks, while the strong eyelashes stand out. The artist's concern for decoration, and the quality of his models, are betrayed by various elements: the Virgin's gold-embroidered red *maphorion* with its pinkish-red inner lining and gold star on the head and shoulder; her dark-green dress, finely adorned with flowers and gold embroidery on the sleeve, and the gold net restraining her hair; and also by Christ's blue tunic and the greenish-blue globe of the world in his left hand, encircled by a gold band with the signs of the zodiac and the symbols of heaven; and the halos, with embossed decoration, which form flowers. The representation is completed by the baroque wooden throne, richly decorated with stylised leaves and flowers, and winged angel's heads on its legs.
At the bottom of the icon is the painter's signature in white lettering: *ΔΙΑ ΧΕΙΡΟϹ ΤΕΡΠΟΥ ΑΠΟ ΚΟΡ[Υ]ΤΖΑ* ('From the hand of Terpos of Korcë') and the worn date *1787 ΜΑΡ(ΤΙΟΥ) 20* ('1787, March 20').
In addition to the associations with engravings mentioned above, the articulation of the composition, the Virgin's stance, and the throne directly recall an icon from the same workshop,[5] of which the present painter presumably had a pricked cartoon.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Drishti 2003, no. 43.
Trésors d'art albanais 1993, no. 77 (the text refers to a different icon).

1. See cat. no. 49.
2. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 407. Caca 2002, 206-207. Tsigaras 2003, 305-306. Popovska-Korobar 2005, 93-99.
3. Subotić 1985, 99-109.
4. Papastratou 1986, nos. 430-433.
5. See cat. no. 52.



61. Icon with two zones, with the Virgin enthroned and Child, angels and saints

57 x 42.5 x 2.2 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3172
Provenance: Church of Saint Paraskevi, Prëmet
Date: 1800
Painter: Terpos

The icon is an original composition, commissioned and dedicated by Mark, a believer, in 1800, a period at which the plague was threatening the general area of south Albania. The composition includes, in the upper zone, the Virgin enthroned with Christ holding the globe of the world, flanked by two angels supplicating, with scrolls bearing the inscriptions: *ΧΑΙΡΕ ΟΤΙ ΥΠΑΡΧΕΙC ΒΑCΙΛΕΩC ΚΑΘΕΔΡΑ* and *ΧΑΙΡΕ ΟΤΙ ΒΑCΤΑΖΕΙC ΤΟΝ ΒΑCΤΑΖΟΝΤΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ* ('Hail for you are the King's throne' and 'Hail that you bear Him who bears the universe'). Saint Athanasios, shown half-length, and two more angels flying in the schematically rendered sky, complete the decoration of the upper zone.

In the lower zone, the five saints, Bessarion, Seraphim, Charalambis, Dionysios and Naum tread on a Lernaian hydra, a serpent with seven heads, symbolising the plague.

The five miracle-working saints were very popular in Epiros and Macedonia, and were distinguished by their healing of the plague. Saint Bessarion, metropolitan bishop of Larisa and founder of the Dousiko Monastery, lived in the 16th century, and worked miracles both in his lifetime and after his death on 15 September 1540, the day honoured in his memory, especially in Thessaly, Epiros and Macedonia.[1] He was widely venerated in the 17th and above all the 18th century, particularly in connection with the miracles he worked to combat the plaque.[2] The saint is accompanied by the inscription: *ΛΟΙΜΟΥ ΠΑΝΩΛΟΥC ΑΓΙΕ ΒΗCCΑΡΙΩΝ / ΔΙΑCΩCΟΝ ΜΕ CΥΝ ΠΑΝΤΙΜΟΥ ΤΩ ΟΙΚΩ, / ΙΝΑ ΥΜΝΩ CΕ ΕΝ ΠΑΝΤΙ ΜΟΥ ΤΩ ΒΙΩ, / ... [Μ]ΑΡΚΟ[C] ΔΟΥΛΟC CΟΥ ΚΑΘΙΚΕΤΕΥΩ* ('Saint Bessarion, / save me from the plague with this honourable house, / that I may sing thy praises all my life / I beseech thee, thy servant Markos').[3]

This is the only one of the five inscriptions in which it is possible, on the basis of the four letters preserved in the appropriate position, to restore the donor's name, which was Markos. In the other inscriptions, the name has deliberately been erased.

The next depiction is of the holy martyr Seraphim from the Agrapha. In 1601, Seraphim was accused by the Ottoman Turks of taking part in a revolutionary movement led by Dionysios the Philosopher, the metropolitan bishop of Larisa. After his martyrdom, his relic was presented to the Koroni Monastery, where it worked miracles, especially in times of plague epidemics. He is frequently shown treading on the plague, depicted as a naked daemon, sometimes with wings.[4] These representations accompanied the saint's *Akolouthies*, such as an *Akolouthia* of 1790, in which the saint is depicted treading on a naked daemon: 'Seraphim is treading on me, the plague, bane of men, woe is me, woe that I am seen supine, naked, ugly, killed'.[5]

In the present icon, the saint is accompanied by the inscription: *ΙΕΡΟΜΑΡΤΥC CΕΡΑΦΕΙΜ ΘΕΡΜΗ ΠΙCΤΕΙ / ΤΗΝ CΗΝ ΠΡΟCΚΥΝΩ ΠΑΝCΕΒΑCΤΟΝ ΕΙΚΟΝΑ / ΟΠΩC ΜΕΛΟΙ ΜΟΥ ΠΑΝ ΔΕΙΝΟΥ ΔΙΑCΩΖΗC/ [ΜΑΡ]ΚΟC ΔΟΥΛΟC CΟΥ ΘΕΡΜΟC ΙΚΕΤΗC* ('Holy martyr Seraphim, with fervent faith I venerate thy venerable icon, so that next thou wilt preserve me from all evil. Markos, they servant and fervent beseecher').

The next saint, Charalambis, lived in the 2nd century AD in Magnesia, Asia Minor. He was a priest and bishop, and died a martyr's death at a great age. He was widely venerated from the middle of the 17th century in connection with his protection of believers from the plague, and he has been honoured in many parts of Greece since that time as a protector against infectious diseases, especially the plague.[6] He is shown in many representations treading on a daemon,[7] who is naked and winged, with horns.[8] More rarely, the saint treads on the plague depicted in the form of a reclining skeleton with an hourglass on its head and a sickle in its hand.[9] In the present icon, Charalambis is accompanied by the inscription: *ΑΘΛΗΤΑ ΧΑΡΑΛΑΜΠΕ (ΚΑΙ) ΙΕΡΟΜΑΡΤΥC / ΡΥΟΥ, CΚΕΠΕ, CΩΖΕ ΜΕ ΤΟΝ CΟΝ ΙΚΕΤΗΝ / ΥΔΡΑC ΚΑΚΙCΤΗC, ΗΝ ΠΟΔΕC CΟΥ ΠΑΤΟΥCΙ / [ΜΑΡΚΟC ΔΟΥΛΟC] CΟΥ ΠΡΗΝΗC ΙΚΕΤΗC* ('champion Charalambos and holy martyr, rescue, protect and save me, your suppliant, [from] the evil hydra, whom your feet trample Markos your servant and prostrate suppliant').

Similar texts are to be found in the *Megalynaria* of the saint written by Nikodemos of Mount Athos, such as: *πανώλους ἐλατῆρα, ῥῦσαι ἐκ βλάβης λοιμοῦ τοῦ πανωλέθρου, Χαράλαμπε γενναῖε, λοιμοῦ σὲ ἀναδείξας ῥύστην ὀξύτατον, λυτρῶσαι οὖν πάσης ἀνάγκης τῆς πανώλους* ('driver away of plagues, rescue us from the harm of the destructive pestilence, brave Charalambos, who were designated the most keen protector from plague, rescue us, then from all need of pestilence').

Saint Dionysios of Olympos,[10] miracle-worker and founder of the monasteries of the Holy Trinity on Mount Olympos and at Zagora, abbot of the Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos and renovator of the Prodromos Monastery at Veria, is also depicted in the icon. His sanctity, and his treatment of the sick during his lifetime, and his tomb in the Cave on Mount Olympos, to which believers flocked, made the saint very popular throughout Ma-


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cedonia. Reference is made in the Paraclete of the Canon to a miracle worked against the plague.[11] In a portable icon of 1839, now in a private collection, he is depicted along with Saint Nikanor treading on the plague, in the form of a naked, horned daemon.[12]

In this icon, the saint is accompanied by the inscription: *ΚΛΕΟC ΟCΙΩΝ ΔΙΟΝΥCΙΕ ΘΕΙΕ, / ΠΡΕCΒΕΥΕ ΑΕΙ ΤΗ ΤΡΙΛΑΜΠΕΙ ΤΡΑΔΙ, / ΟΠΩC ΜΗ ΛΟΙΜΟC ΤΩ ΟΙΚΩ ΜΟΥ ΠΕΛΑCΙ / [ΜΑΡΚΟC] ΔΟΥΛΟC CΟΥ ΔΕΟΜΕ ΠΟΘΩ* ('Glory of the saints, Dionysios, divine, mediate with the thrice-brilliant trinity, I, Markos, your servant, pray and wish that no plague approach my house').

The fifth saint is Naum, who lived in the 9th century and was one of the best-known pupils of Cyril and Methodius. He was very popular in Macedonia, and founded the monastery named after him on the shores of lake Ohrid, where his tomb is to be found.[13] The saint is depicted here, too, at an advanced age, with luxuriant hair and beard, blessing and holding a closed scroll, in conformity with the model that was consolidated in the 14th century in the area of Ohrid.[14] In the early 19th century, when the present icon was painted, engravings with depictions of the saint were very widely found,[15] in addition to the iconographic tradition in wall-paintings and icons.

There is an inscription below the saint: *ΟCΙΕ ΝΑΟΥΜ ΠΑΜΦΑΕCΤΑΤΕ ΠΑΤΕΡ / ΗΓΙΑCΜΕΝΕ ΑΛΗΘΩC ΤΩ ΚΥΡΙΩ / ΔΕΗCΙΝ ΠΟΙΟΥ ΠΡΟC ΤΟΝ ΠΑΝΤΩΝ Δ[ΕCΠΟΤΗΝ] / Η[ΜΩΝ] ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ CΟΥ Μ[ΑΡΚΟΥ]* ('Saint Naum, most brilliant father, truly sanctified in the Lord, pray for us to our Master of All, from your servant Markos').

The five verse inscriptions are written by the same hand (presumably that of the painter) that also wrote the other inscriptions on the icon. The text of these inscriptions was probably supplied written out to the painter, as is apparent from the names of the saints in the inscriptions, which are correctly spelled, in contrast with the other inscriptions on the icon. Each inscription, which is addressed to one of the five saints, consists of four verses of iambic dodecasyllables in the style in which the hymns, *troparia* and *canons* of the Orthodox Church were composed and widely disseminated. In particular, a large number of hymns were written about the plague and seeking the protection of saints.[16]

A shared feature of all five inscriptions is the endeavour to erase the letters of the donor's name. Fortunately, the intervention in the first inscription was not very successful, and the name Markos can be made out. The reason for this deliberate effacing of the name is presumably connected with a change of ownership of the icon. This is not a common phenomenon, but there are examples, even from the Byzantine period, in which the name is erased from inscriptions in an attempt to efface the memory of the person along with his or her name (*damnatio memoriae*).

The unknown donor Markos commissioned this icon in 1800, wishing to secure the protection of 'his house', as it says in the inscription, from the plague. The 18th century is preeminently the century of the plague, which recurred repeatedly in the Balkan Peninsula. The economic flowering of the end of the century and the increase in population were conducive to the rapid spread of the disease. It is known to have struck Mount Athos, Thessaloniki, Ioannina and the interior of Macedonia in the last quarter of this century. In Albania, specific evidence for a plague epidemic in 1805 in Voskopojë and Korcë is provided by the traveller W.M. Leake.[17]

Depictions of the plague are to be found in western[18] and Orthodox painting,[19] in which it is most commonly shown as a skeleton holding a sickle or as a figure of death, as in the depictions of Saint Spyridon by the painter Spyridon Sperantzas in the second half of the 18th century.[20] It is also rendered as a naked winged daemon holding a sickle in a lithograph of 1834 showing Saint Spyridon 'persecutor of the plague'.[21]

The depiction of the plague as a serpent with seven heads (as the Lernaian hydra), in the present icon is rare and interesting, and is without iconographic parallel. The serpent in general is the symbol of sin, but the serpent with seven heads is particularly associated with the text of Revelation. This dragon in the form of a serpent with a scaly hide and seven heads is depicted in scenes of the apocalypse, such as the struggle with the seven-headed dragon, the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth, the harlot Babylon and her beast. It is found in wall-paintings in many monasteries on Mount Athos,[22] particularly the Xiropotamou Monastery, where the painter of the present icon worked in 1783.[23]

In the present icon, the painter appears to borrow the motif of the dragon with seven heads of the Apocalypse in order to depict the terrible sickness of the plague.

The signature *καὶ διὰ χειρὸς ΤΕΡΠΟΥ*[24] *ζωγράφου* ('by the hand of Terpos the painter') and the date *ΕΤος ΑΩ* ('in the year 1800') is written in ochre lettering at the bottom right of the upper zone of the icon. It is a work of great importance, since it is to be seen in the context of the decisive impact made by folk painters on 18th-century art. Well-to-do donors built, renewed and decorated churches, in which they often asked to be depicted; or, like Markos in this icon, asked the painter for an original composition, in this case relating to the plague. The iconography and the inscriptions accompanying the composition are an example of the adaptation of the subject of an Orthodox icon to the requirements of the time and the congregation.

Unpublished

1. See Sophianos 1994, with hymns relating to the saint.
2. Angelomati-Tsoungaraki 1997. A large number of hymns, *troparia* and 15 complete *canons* (5 published and 10 unpublished) have been written for the saint (Sofianos 1994, 67).
3. For similar material in iambic dodecasyllables, such as: *Κάκιστε λοιμέ, ἔρρε εἰς ᾅδου τόπον. Πατήσας πάθη, Βησσαρίων τὸ πρώην, πατεῖν τὸν λοιμὸν νῦν ἔλαβες τὴν χάριν* ('Evil plague, go to hell, Having trampled on other sufferings, Bessarion, you have now received the grace to trample on the plague'), see Sofianos 1994, loc. cit. In the 18th century, a paracletic canon was composed for the plague by the monk Anatolios from the Dousikou Monastery: *"Ωσπερ τις δράκων τὸν ἰὸν ἐξέχεε σωματοφθόρος λοιμὸς* ('Like a dragon the body-destroying plague poured forth poison') (Sofianos 1994, 65-67).
4. See Papastratou 1986, 285-288, figs. 307-308.
5. Papastratou 1986, 286, fig. 1.
6. See Vasilaki 1985-1986.
7. Engraving dating from 1816 (Papastratou 1986, 126, fig. 110).
8. In an engraving of the early 19th century (Papastratou 1986, 297, figs. 321, 326).
9. Papastratou 1986, figs. 322, 323, 324.
10. Efstratiadis, 116.
11. Syndica-Lourda 1969.
12. Syndica-Lourda 1969, 886. See also Tsigaras 2003, 198 and Papastratou 1986, 251.
13. The first *Akolouthia* of the saint was published in Venice in 1695, and the second in Voskopojë in 1749.
14. Grozdanov 1983, 105-112.
15. Papastratou 1986, 269-270. Grozdanov 1983, 230, 233. For depictions of Naum in works by painters from Korcë see Tsigaras 2003, 193.
16. See Sofianos 1994, 65-66.
17. Kostis 1995, 406.
18. For depictions of the plague in western painting see Mason 2001.
19. For depictions of the plague see also Provatakis 1980 and Vasilaki 1985-1986, note 31.
20. *Λιμάνια και Καράβια στο Βυζαντινό Μουσείο* 1997, no. 21.
21. Papastratou 1986, 291, no. 313.
22. Huger 1995.
23. Tsigaras 2003, 234.
24. For the painter see cat. no. 60.



62. The Virgin *Esphagmeni* with scenes from the Dodekaorton and saints

67 x 51 x 5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 1686
Provenance: Unknown
Date: 1828
Painter: Michael from Megarovo

The surface of this early 19th-century icon, in which the predominant colour is red, is divided into panels of differing sizes containing representations that frame the central figure of the Virgin and Child. The Mother of God, in the type of the *Hodigitria*, is crowned by angels and receives the supplication of Saints Athanasios and John the Baptist. The bloody wound in her right cheek is a reference to the *Esphagmeni* ('wounded') Virgin of the Vatopedi Monastery "who was wounded in the cheek by a deacon of the monastery", according to an inscription on an engraving made in Venice in 1763, depicting the Virgin *Vatopedini*.[1] This type of the Virgin circulated widely in 18th- and 19th-century engravings "to be given to Orthodox Christians free, for the sake of piety",[2] and the representation was accompanied by depictions of the monastery and other religious representations. Paper icons with similar iconography from large Orthodox monasteries, mostly on Mount Athos, were widely disseminated at this same period and were presumably the source for the painter of the present icon, not only for the figure of the Virgin, but also for the individual scenes in it.

The depictions from the Dodekaorton are, from left to right and top to bottom of the icon: the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Baptism, the Raising of Lazarus, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Transfiguration, the Crucifixion and the Anastasis, all of them accompanied by the relevant inscriptions. In the central panel of the icon, in addition to the main representation of the Virgin, there is a depiction of the Holy Trinity and two zones with the hierarchs Basil, Chrysostomos and Gregory, and the saints Panteleemon, Nicholas, Spyridon and Charalambis (in the second zone). The composition is completed by Saints George and Demetrios at the bottom sides.

In this icon can be recognised the painting models for the individual scenes, which were drawn from engravings, and also the same iconographic types as in other icons in the exhibition, particularly works by painters from Korcë. The scenes of the Annunciation, the Nativity, and the Holy Trinity, for example, reproduce the same iconographic types that we have already seen in icons by Athanasios and Konstantinos of Korcë, while Saint Charalambis with the plague at his feet and the mounted Saints George and Demetrios are found in works by Terpos of Korcë, Konstantinos the hieromonk and Ioannis Tzetiris,[3] all of them dating from the 18th century. The existence of similar iconographic types in these works is to be explained not only in terms of their drawing on common models in engravings, but also by the use of common painting sketches (*anthivola*), which circulated amongst the painters of the same generation and were also handed down to later generations as valuable accessories of their art.[4]

At the bottom of the present icon is a minuscule inscription: *Δέησις τὸν δοῦλον τοῦ Θεοῦ Παντελεήμων 1828* και *διὰ χειρὸς Μιχαὴλ Κωνσταντίνου ἐκ κόμης Μαγάροβον* ('Prayer of the servant of God Panteleemon 1828' and 'by the hand of Michael son of Konstantinos of the township of Magarovo') giving the name of the donor, Panteleemon, and the painter, Michael, son of Konstantinos of Magarovo, and the date 1828.

Nothing more is known of the career of the painter Michael. Megarovo, a village near Monastiri, was settled by people from Voskopojë after their town was desolated. The art of Michael gives expression in the simplest manner to the vivid, joyful colours and the immediacy of painters and craftsmen from the villages of Epiros and Macedonia in the 18th and early 19th century.

Unpublished

1. Papastratou 1986, no. 447. Davidov 2004, 191.
2. Papastratou, op. cit.
3. See cat. nos. 42, 43, 48, 49, 54, 61, 63.
4. See Vasilaki 1995. See also *Εκ Χιονιάδων σπουδές και ανθίβολα* 2004.



63. Triptych with the Virgin Glykophilousa, prophets and saints

57 x 52.4 x 8 cm. (closed)
Inv. no. IN 5604
Provenance: Unknown
Date: 1753
Painter: Ioannis Tzetiris (attributed)



The central leaf of the triptych is dominated by the tender group of the Virgin and the infant Christ, who stands on her lap with his arm around her neck and their faces gently touching.

Different versions of this type, overtly showing the tenderness of the Virgin *Glykophilousa*, were very common in Post-Byzantine painting, examples being the Virgin of the Kykkou Monastery in Cyprus[1] or the Virgin *Axion Esti*. These types were widely circulated throughout the Orthodox world in the form of engravings.[2] The stance of Christ in this icon may be seen in a 19th-century copperplate engraving executed on Mount Athos.[3]

The choice of this particular type of the Virgin was probably connected with the fact that its painter, Ioannis Tzetiris, had studied painting in Russia and also some of the Balkan countries, where this type of the Virgin was widespread from as early as the late Byzantine period.[4] And the same type of the Virgin *Glykophilousa*, depicted on a triptych from Thessaloniki of the same period as the present icon (1755), has been linked with the Virgin *Glykophilousa* of Korsun, the Russian name of Chersonesos, the commercial port of the Crimaea, near Sebastopol.[5]

The Virgin and Child spring from the trunk of a tree, with the twelve prophets depicted in medallions around them. This is an iconographic combination of the doctrinally related scenes of the Tree of Jesse and the From on High the Prophets, which are associated with the Incarnation.[6]

The inside of the outer leaves of the triptych are divided into four zones. They depict Saint George and Saint Demetrios on horseback, wearing military uniform, in the first zone, Saints Constantine and Helen, and Saints Nicholas and Athanasios in the second zone, and Saints Catherine and Marina and the healing Saints Kosmas and Damian with the relic of Saint Spyridon between them in the third zone. The final zone has depictions of Saint John the Baptist, Saint Paraskeve and the Archangel Michael.

On the outside of the outer leaves are depicted full-length figures, quite badly damaged, of the prophets Elijah and Naum, holding open, inscribed scrolls.

Beneath the representations of the prophets are two inscriptions, unfortunately destroyed at several points. In the minuscule inscription beneath the prophet Elijah the letters *[χ]* *[.τζε]τηρη*[_] can be made out with some difficulty, followed by fragments of letters. The letters *ETOEKOP* can be seen in the second line. In the better preserved majuscule inscription on the right leaf, beneath Saint Naum, can be read the names of the donors: *[ΔΟΥ]ΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ [ΘΕΟΥ] ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ ΝΗCΚΟ ΠΗCΑΚ* ('of the servant of God Demetrios Nisko Pisak').

At the beginning of the minuscule inscription, and the signature of the painter, who is to be identified with Ioannis Tzetiris,[7] the date 1753 covers part of the letters. Although there is no convincing explanation for the fact that the date was inscribed here at a later point



in time, it may be noted that the forms of the numbers, especially the seven, is similar to the numbers in other inscriptions found on icons by Ioannis Tzetiris.[8]

The date 1753 coincides, as far as we know, with the period when the painter worked in Bucharest, from where he returned to his birthplace, the village of Grambovo near Gramshit, in 1755.[9] The simple expressive means of the painter, the limited colour palette, and the naivety of the figures are consistent with the theory that this was an early work by the painter Ioannis Tzetiris, who later developed his drawing and painting skills in the final decades of the 18th century.[10]

The fact that the icon came from a family from Korcë, while confirming that it was used as an object of private worship,[11] does not help to solve the problem of its date. It may be supposed that the painter brought it with him when he returned to his birthplace, and that it remained in the possession of a family from Korcë until it was donated to the Museum in this town.

Unpublished

1. Hadermann-Misguich 1991, 197-204. Tatić-Djurić 1990, 199-207.
2. Papastratou 1986, nos. 522-534, 539-543.
3. Papastratou 1986, no. 102.
4. The Don Virgin (Smirnova 2002, 232). For examples of the type of the Virgin *Glykophilousa* in Russian icons see Ouspensky and Lossky 1983, 99-100. For examples from Bulgaria see Paskaleva 1987, no. 116. Hadermann-Misguich 1991, pl. 104. For the type of the Virgin see also the icon of the Virgin *Eleousa* in the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki (inv. no. BEI 780), published in the catalogue *Μήτηρ Θεού* 2000 (A. Tourta, 478-470).
5. Semoglou 1998, 344-345.
6. See cat. no. 41.
7. For the painter see cat. no. 66.
8. See cat. nos. 64, 65. It should also be noted that the conservators of the Museum of Byzantine Culture did not detect evidence for the chronological separation of the layer with the inscription and that with the date.
9. Moutafov 2002, 223.
10. See cat. nos. 64-66.
11. See Chatzidaki 1997, 36-37.

64. Christ enthroned, Great High Priest, the Vine

96.5 x 71 x 5.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 6791
Provenance: Church of Saint George, Fier
Date: 1798
Painter: Ioannis Tzetiris

The icons of Christ enthroned and the Virgin (cat. no. 65), which has the same dimensions, adorned the templon of the church of Saint George at Fier. Christ follows the type of an earlier icon signed by Ioannis Tzetiris and his brother, George,[1] and combines elements drawn from the iconography of the Great High Priest and the Vine.



The minuscule inscription in black lettering on the red footstool reads: *1798 Φεβρουάριος 15 / διὰ χειρὸς τοῦ Ἰω(άννη) Τζετίρη / ἐκ πολιτείας Γραμπόβας* ('1798, February 15 / by the hand of Ioannis Tzetiris / of the town of Grabova').

Although the art of the painter may be recognised in this icon by Ioannis Tzetiris of Grabovo, dated 1798, particular attention and care were clearly taken in the execution of the modelling of the faces and the decoration on the garments worn by Christ and the gold throne. These features, which may be observed in the despotic icon of the Virgin from the same church, are associated with the art of the fine painters from Korcë, Konstantinos and Athanasios, and particularly with the work of Terpos, Athanasios's son, who was active at the same period as Ioannis Tzetiris.[2] The fine models of the painters from Korcë are probably the source of the decoration on the throne and Christ's vestments, with large flowers,[3] which create a more refined baroque atmosphere than in the earlier works by the same painter.[4]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Trésors d'art albanais 1993, no. 69.

1. See cat. no. 66, with biographical details of the painters.
2. See cat. nos. 60, 61.
3. See cat. no. 53.
4. See cat. no. 66.



65. The Virgin enthroned, the Tree of Jesse

97 x 69.5 x 3.7 cm.
Inv. no. IN 6796
Provenance: Church of Saint George, Fier
Date: 1798
Painter: Ioannis Tzetiris (attributed)

The despotic icon of the Virgin enthroned, the Tree of Jesse, adorned the templon of the church of Saint George at Fier, together with the icon of Christ.[1] The Virgin, an imposing presence, with the sceptre in her hand, sits on a heavy gold throne, holding Christ in her arms, who blesses and holds the globe of the world. On the gold background of the icon, angels in bust emerge from clouds, unrolling an inscribed ribbon above the Virgin's head. At the Virgin's feet, on a large red footstool, is the aged figure of Jesse, from whom spring the branches of the tree, encircling the enthroned Virgin and forming medallions containing the twelve prophets. This is a combination of two related doctrinal subjects, the Tree of Jesse, and From on High the Prophets, which is found in works of Post-Byzantine painting.[2] The text on the ribbon held by the angels *Ἄνωθεν οἱ προφῆταί σε προκατήγγηλαν, κόρη, στάμνον ῥάβδον τράπεζα κιβωτὲ πύλη κλῆμαξ θρώνε χρυσοῦν* ('From on high the prophets foretold, thee, daughter as a pitcher, a rood, a table, an ark, a gate, a ladder, a gold throne') and the inscriptions on the scrolls held by the prophets are associated with prefigurations of the Virgin. At the left, from top to bottom, are David: *Ἐγὼ κιβωτὸν Ἡγιασμένην (κέκλησκά) σε κόρη* ('I called thee a sanctified ark, O daughter'), Moses: *Εἶδόν σε πύλη...* ('I saw thee as a gate'), Aaron: *Εἶδόν σε ῥάβδον ἀνθήσασα* ('I saw thee as a blossoming rod'), Isaiah: *Εἶδόν σε λαβήδα ἀνθρακοφόρον* ('I saw thee as a tongs for coal'), Daniel: *Εἶδόν σε ὄρος ἐξ οὗ περιετμήθη λήθος* ('I saw thee as a mountain from which a stone was cut'), and Habbakuk: *Εἶδόν σε δασὴ καὶ κατάσκυον ὄρος* ('I saw thee as a dense and shady mountain'). On the right are depicted Solomon: *Εἶδον κλίνην τοῦ βασιλέως κόρη* ('I saw thee as a couch of a King, O daughter'), Jacob: *Κλῆμάξ σε εἶδον τοῦ Θεοῦ* ('I saw thee as a leader of God'), Gedeon: *Πόκον εἶδόν σε παρθένε...* ('I saw thee as a tuft of wool, maiden'), Jeremiah: *Εἶδόν σε ὁδὸν Ἰσραὴλ κόρη* ('I saw thee as a way for Israel, O daughter'), Ezekiel: *Ἐγώ σε εἶδα πύλην τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν μητέρα* ('I saw thee as a gate of God the mother of God') and Zacharias: *Εἶδόν σε ἁγνὴ ἑπτάφωτο λυχνία* ('I saw thee as a chaste lamp with seven lights'). The inscriptions of the prophets have some interesting grammatical forms, such as *εἶδα* instead of the formal *εἶδον* in Ezekiel's inscription, and also a number of spelling mistakes, such as the words *λαβήδα, δασὴ* και *κατάσκυον*, with their variant renderings of the 'i' sound.

The icon, like the corresponding icon of Christ with the signature of Ioannis Tzetiris, is distinguished by its great attention to the design and decoration, and also its affinity with the works of the painter Terpos of Korcë. The figure of the Virgin recalls the icon of Terpos with the Virgin enthroned,[3] and is even more closely connected with the signed icon of the Virgin, the Tree of Jesse, by the same painter, dated to 1797,[4] one year before the present icon. During the final period of his career, Ioannis Tzetiris seems to have made close contact with the famous painters of Korcë,[5] and assimilated many elements of their work.

Unpublished

1. See cat. no. 64.
2. See, for example, the cat. nos. 41, 63, 67.
3. See cat. no. 60.
4. Caca 2002, 215, fig. 11.
5. See cat. nos. 48-61.



66. Christ enthroned, Great High Priest, the Vine

93 x 54.2 x 3 cm.
Inv. no. IN 6828
Provenance: Vlorë
Date: 1792
Painters: Georgios and Ioannis Tzetiris

The painters Ioannis Tzetiris and his brother George, who had very active careers in the Balkans during the second half of the 18th and early 19th century, signed this icon of Christ enthroned, the precise provenance of which is unknown. Its subject and dimensions suggest that it was a despotic icon of a church in the area of Vlorë, from which it comes.

Christ the Great High Priest, wearing richly decorated prelate's vestments, a solid gold mitre and *enkolpion*, and seated on a gold throne, is depicted against a gold background. At the top of the representation, two angels kneel on clouds, while the twelve apostles are depicted in medallions around the central figure of Christ, as *branches of the vine*, which springs from Jesus's feet. The combination of the iconographic subject of the Vine also dictated the passage on Christ's open scroll: *Ἐγὼ εἰμὴ ἡ ἄμπελος, ὑμεῖς τὰ κλήματα, ὁ μένων ἐν ἐμοὶ κἀγὼ ἐν αυτῷ, οὗτος φέρει καρπὸν πολὺν* ('I am the vine and ye are the branches: He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit') (John 15, 5).

On Christ's red footstool, in black lettering, is the minuscule inscription: *Δέησις τοῦ δούλου τοῦ Θεοῦ Νάση Τζίκα διὰ ψυχικὴν σωτηρίαν αὐτοῦ, γονέων καὶ τέκνων αὐτοῦ: χεὶρ Γεωργίου καὶ Ἰωάννου τῶν αὐταδέλφων ἐκ τῆς κομοπόλλις Γράμπωβας: 1792 Μαρτίου 25* ('Prayer of the servant of God, Nasis Tzikas for the salvation of his souls, and those of his parents and children: the hand of Georgios and Ioannis, brothers, from the township of Grabova: 1792, March 25').

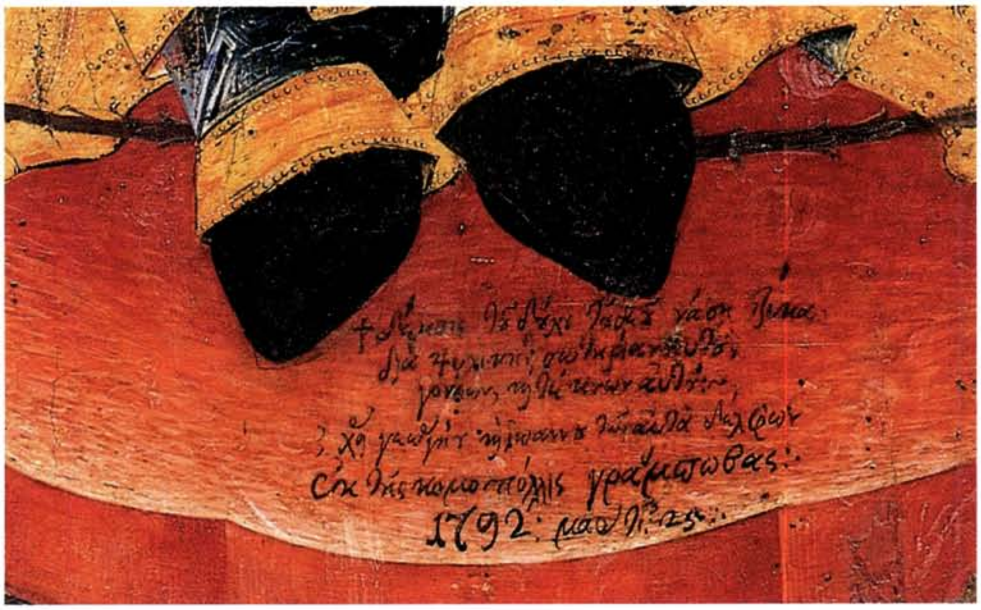
According to the inscription, the icon of Christ was dedicated by Nasis Tzikas on 25 March of the year 1792, for the salvation of his own and his family's souls, and was the work of the brothers Georgios and Ioannis from Grabovo, which is referred to in inscriptions as a township, as here or as a *politeia* or *chora* in other works by them.[1]

They are from a family of painters, consisting of Ioannis Tzetiris, his brother George, and his three sons, Konstantinos, Nikolaos and Naum. Together with Georgios's assistant, Petros, also from Grabovo, they were active from the middle of the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century. Ioannis followed a personal professional path that was fairly interesting and typical of a painter of the late 18th century in the Balkans. In 1736, he set forth from Grabovo for Hungary, and later for Russia, in order to 'learn the art'. In 1750 he went to Bucharest, in 1754 from Bucharest to Bogdania 'to work', in 1755 he returned to his native village 'to get married' and in 1761 he travelled from Voskopojë to Wallachia. Between 1754 and 1812 he executed at least 15 ensembles of wall-paintings in Albania and the area of the former metropolitan see of Srmski Karlovtsi, which covered parts of modern north Yugoslavia, west Bulgaria, Romania and south Hungary.[2] Several portable icons by the brothers are to be found in the Albania.[3]

In the present icon, the iconographic combination of Christ the Great High Priest and the Vine seems to have satisfied the preferences of the donors of the period, since it is also found in later works by these moderate painters, with an overt tendency towards decoration and luxury, expressed mainly through the use of gold and red.

Unpublished

1. Popa 1998, nos. 168, 169. See also cat. no. 64.
2. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 438, with earlier bibliography. Todorov 2000. Moutafov 2002.
3. See cat. nos. 63-65. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, nos. 70, 71. *Percorsi del sacro*, nos. 17-22.




IC XC
Ο ΩΝ
ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ
Η ΑΜΠΕΛ
ΟΣ ΚΑΙ
ΥΜΙΣ ΤΑ
ΚΛΗΜΑ
ΤΑ ΟΜΕ
ΝΩΝ ΕΝ
ΕΜΟΙ ΚΑΓ
Ω ΕΝ ΑΥ
ΤΩ ΟΥΤΟ
ΦΕΡΕΙ ΠΟ
ΛΥΝ ΚΑΡΠΟΝ

67. The Virgin enthroned, the Unfading Rose, the Tree of Jesse

81 x 47 x 5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3073
Provenance: Church of Saint Nicholas, village of Argovë, Prëmet
Date: 1827
Painter: Nikolaos Pozenalis

In this icon of the Virgin, dating from the early 19th century, iconographic elements drawn from the depiction of the Virgin as the Unfading Rose and as the Tree of Jesse are combined with the subject of From on High the Prophets,[1] with a certain folkloric naivety and liveliness. Above the angels, who place the crown on the Virgin's head, is the inscription from the Canon of Joseph the Hymnographer, which is sung during the Lauds: *ΡΟΔΟΝ ΤΟ ΑΜΑΡΑΝΤΟΝ ΧΑΙΡΕ Η ΜΟΝΗ ΒΛΑCΤΗCΑCΑ ΤΟ ΜΗΛΟΝ ΤΟ ΕΥΟCΜΟΝ ΧΑΙΡΕ Η ΤΕΞΑCΑ* ('unfading rose, hail, you who alone budded forth the fragrant apple, hail, you who did bear'). From the figure of Jesse springs a tree, with the twelve prophets amongst its branches, encircling the Virgin enthroned, holding the Christ Child and wearing royal raiment. The subject, frequently found in engravings of the period,[2] is naively rendered with simple colour combinations, though it is not without reminiscences of the luxurious atmosphere of baroque that was preferred by 18th-century painters and donors. At the bottom left of the icon is the signature of the painter, who was no calligraphist: *διὰ χ(ει)ρὸς Νικόλαος ἱερέας Ποζεναλῆς* ('by the hand of Nikolaos the priest of Pozenali') and the date 1827. The hitherto unknown folk painter and priest Nikolaos probably came from the village of Postenali near Prëmet, from where another painter, the reader Petros, also came, according to an inscription of 1802.[3]

Unpublished

1. For the same subject see cat. no. 41.
2. See Papastratou 1986, no. 133.
3. Popa 1998, no. 396.





68. Christ *Eleëmon and Polyelaios*

105.3 x 78 x 3.5 cm.
Inv. no. 3898
Provenance: Church of the Annunciation to the Virgin, Tiranë
Date: 1830
Painters: Michael and Dimitrios, his son

Christ, accompanied by the inscription: *ΕΛΕΗΜΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΥΕΛΕΟΣ* ('Christ of Mercy') is depicted on a gold ground in the type of the Pantokrator in a large icon which adorned the metropolitan church of Tiranë dedicated to the Annunciation.

The heavy decorative style of the piece is at once evident, as, too, are the care taken in the execution and the fine lettering on the open scroll, with the correctly spelled passages from Matthew: 'Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in. Naked, and ye clothed me, I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me' (Matthew 25, 34-37). 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light' (Matthew 11, 28-30).

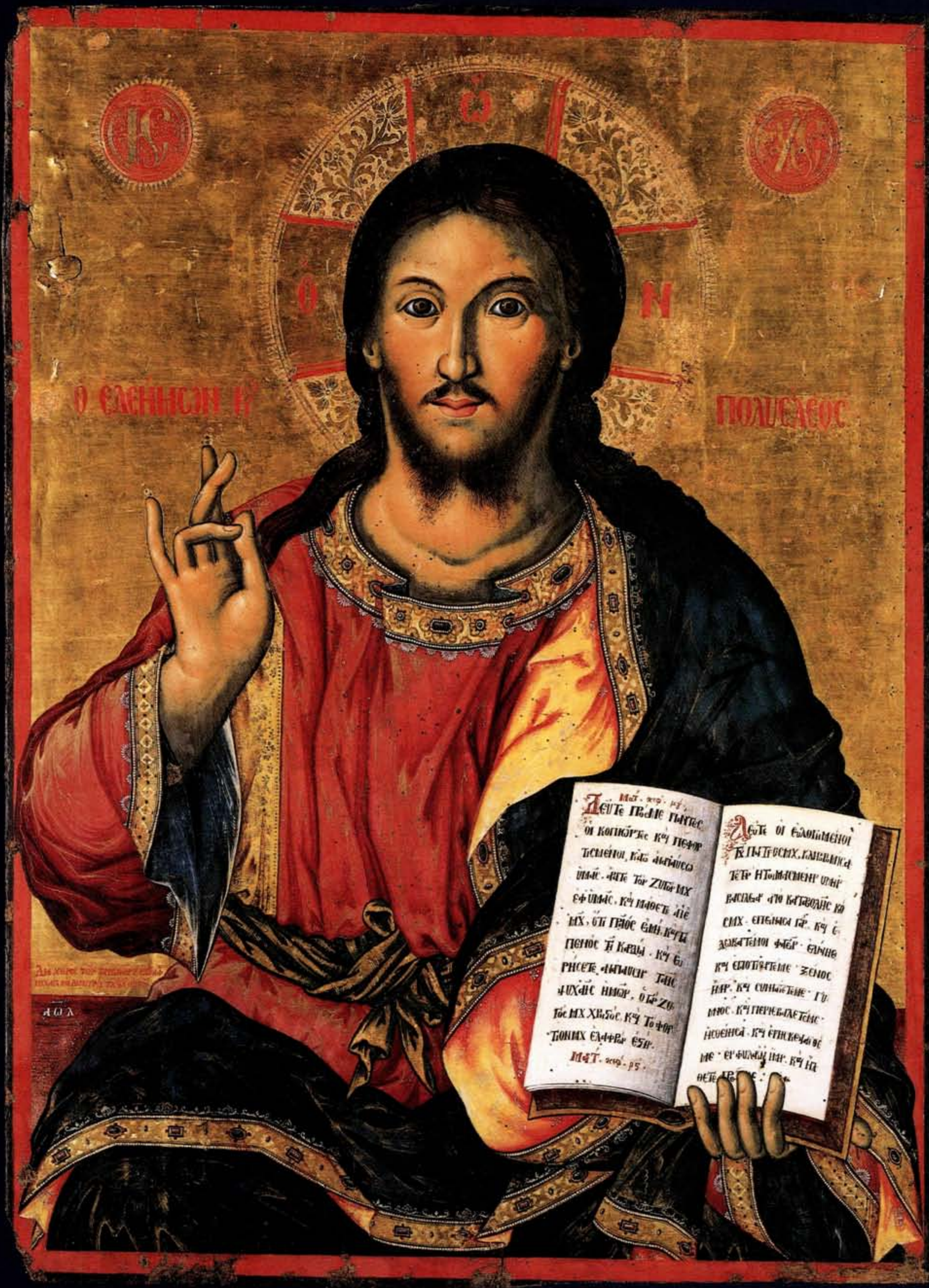
The baroque-style decoration of the halo and the gold-embroidered clothing, the vivid colours, the soft modelling in an endeavour to render genuine characteristics in the hair and eyes, in which the eyelids can be made out, and the manner in which the heavy garments hang, place the icon in the early 19th century. The same iconographic type of Christ, the decorative elements, and above all the garments, which are also found in the icon by the painter Michael of Samarina at Elbasan,[1] also circulated in engravings from Mount Athos at the same period.[2] These engravings were presumably used by the painters, who sign at the bottom left of the icon in fine lettering, identical to that of the gospel passage: *ΔΙΑ ΧΕΙΡΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΤΑΠΕΙΝΩΝ ΖΩΓΡΑΦΩΝ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΚΑΙ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΥΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΑΩΛ*, ('by the hand of the humble painters Michael and Dimitrios his son, in the year 1830').

The same care in the execution and the decoration can be seen in the wall-paintings, the eleven large-scale icons, and the sanctuary doors of the metropolitan church of Elbasan,[3] which were executed by the same painters between 1826 and 1828.[4] The well-known painter Michael, a reader, from Samarina in Epiros, and his son Dimitrios, worked in Greece at Samarina and Kalambaka,[5] and also on many churches in Albania and the former Yugoslavia, usually signing in Greek and more rarely in Slavonic, executing, for example, the icons on the new iconostasis in the monastery of Saint John the Baptist at Bigor, between 1831 and 1835.[6] In the narthex of the Treskavac Monastery, in 1849, they sign as *διὰ χειρὸς τῶν ταπεινῶν ζωγράφων Μιχαὴλ καὶ Ζήση ἐκ Κρουσιόβου* ('by the hand of the humble painters Michael and Zisis of Krousovo'); *διὰ χειρὸς ἐμοῦ τοῦ εὐτελοῦς Μιχαὴλ ἀναγνώστου ζωγράφου τοῦ ἐκ Σαμαρίνης* ('by my hand, the worthless Michael, reader and painter of Samarina') on an *artophorion* from Monastiri in 1826, and: *διὰ χειρὸς Μιχαὴλ ἀναγνώστου υἱοῦ Δημητρίου τοῦ ἐκ Σαμαρίνης* ('by the hand of Michael, reader and his son Dimitrios of Samarina') on two icons in the Bigorski Monastery, in 1829, and on an icon of the Annunciation, dated 1834, at Podvis.[7] Icons by Michael's son Dimitrios, with whom he collaborated on the present icon in 1830, are to be found in what is now Albania and the former Yugoslavia, amongst them two large icons from Fier[8] and a signed icon of the archangel Michael in the old church of Golemo Tsrsko at Kitchevo, dated 1828.[9]

Unpublished

1. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 88. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, no. 44.
2. See Papastratou 1986, nos. 1-5.
3. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, nos. 85-97. *Percorsi del sacro* 2002, nos. 43-51.
4. Mašnić 1996.
5. Chatzidakis and Drakopoulou 1997, 196, with bibliography. See also Drakopoulou 2002, 113-114.
6. Nikolovski 1994. Nazlasi 2003, 297-302.
7. Mašnić 1996.
8. *Trésors d'art albanais* 1993, no. 103. The catalogue refers to the *école albanaise*, without giving the name of the painter.
9. Mašnić 1996.





69. Saint Christopher *Kynokephalos*

110.7 x 44.7 x 2.5 cm.
Inv. no. IN 3127
Provenance: Church of the Virgin, village of Ogren, Prëmet
Date: 1812

Religious and mythical traditions of the ancient and Christian world and iconographic motifs of ancient Oriental cultures and the Byzantine tradition meet together in this representation of Saint Christopher *Kynokephalos*, a Roman soldier and Christian martyr, who was depicted in the early 19th century in this icon from Ogren in Albania, with western freedom and brilliant colours.

Ο ΑΓΙΟϹ ΜΑΡΤΗϹ ΧΡΙϹΤΟΦΩΡΟϹ ('Saint Christopher the Martyr') is blessed by Christ, who emerges from clouds holding the globe of the world, while an angel, holding a scroll with the inscription *χαῖρε μάρτυ Χριστόφορε* ('Greetings, Christopher, martyr'), crowns the dog-headed figure, who is encircled by a gold halo, in a pictorial allusion to the life of the martyr *ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς ἀκτινολαμπροφεγγαροστόλιστος ἔκειτο στέφανος* ('on his radiant, brilliantly adorned and shining head there was a crown').[1]

At the bottom of the icon, in white lettering, the fairly damaged inscription: *δέησις τῶν δούλων τοῦ Θεοῦ [...] ἐν ἔτει 1812 ἐν μηνὶ Ἰουλίου ιγ* (Prayer of the servants of God ... in the year 1812 in the month of July, xiii') preserves the date, 1812, but not the names of the donors.

The saint, wearing the uniform of a Roman legionary, a bright red chiton, and carrying a shield, holds a spear in his left hand and the cross of martyrdom and a palm-branch in his right. He is depicted as a *ὑπερμήκης γίγαντας* ('very tall giant'), as he is described in the lives, against a light blue background with darker tones and shades of brown at the bottom of the icon to render the naturalistic, charming landscape. A row of low towers in front of blue-white hills is apparently an allusion to a landscape in Africa, from where the saint was descended. According to one version of his life, which goes back to the 11th century, Reprevos, a Libyan mercenary in North Africa, *ἀπὸ τὸ γένος τῶν κυνοκεφάλων, γῆς δὲ τῶν ανθρωποφάγων* ('of the race of the dog-headed'), witnessed the martyrdom of Christians during the persecutions by Decius (250), espoused Christianity and was baptised in Antioch, taking the name Christopher, *πιστὸς τῷ φρονήματι καὶ ἀεὶ τὰ λόγια μελετῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ* ('Faithful in spirit and always studying the word of God'). He then steadfastly endured his martyrdom and was in the end beheaded.[2]

The *Kynokephaloi* are described as mythical monsters living in India, with a human body and a dog's head, along with the *Skiapodes* (a race that used its one, huge foot as a sunshade) and the *Sternophthalmoi* (a race with eyes in their chests), in the works of Ktesias and Megasthenes in the 4th c. BC, from which, probably, they passed into Pliny's *Natural History* (AD 77), and thence into medieval literature. At the same time, the dissemination of the Alexander legend created a literary and visual tradition of hybrid creatures encountered by Alexander the Great in India.[3] In Orthodox iconography, mythical monstrous creatures were depicted in mural painting from the 14th century onwards, in representations of the Lauds, and also in the miniatures in the Serb Psaltery of Munich at about the same period. From the second half of the 16th century, however, the subject was very widely found in the painting of churches in mainland Greece[4] and continued to be depicted in wall-paintings down to the late 18th and early 19th century.[5]

The representation of *Kynokephaloi* as saints, particularly as Saint Christopher in portable icons, which bring to mind depictions of the Egyptian god Anubis, is found in Post-Byzantine painting in a series of works, mainly from Kappadokia and Cyprus, though also from Russia.[6] It may be noted that in Byzantine painting, Saint Christopher is depicted as a handsome youth wearing a warrior's uniform in the type of the military saints,[7] whereas in Post-Byzantine painting he is often also rendered in the type of the giant carrying Christ on his shoulders,[8] in accordance with the model of the saint formulated in western painting, who became patron saint of travellers and, in the modern age, of car-drivers.[9]

In Post-Byzantine icons of the *Kynokephalos* saint, who usually wears the uniform of a Roman soldier, his fierce, ugly face, invariably depicted in profile, is usually emphasised. In the present icon, dating from the early 19th century, the painter's intent, and his westernising manner, which favoured gentle colours and soft, sweet faces, helped to soften the features of the monstrous figure of a savage being unable to speak, and also to render an expression of goodness and endurance in the figure of the *soldier Christ* with his *dog's head*.[10]

Unpublished

1. See Chatzinikolaou 1957, 228.
2. Op. cit., 227-228.
3. See Tourta 2003, with bibliography.
4. Tourta 1991, 131-134 and Tourta 2003, with bibliography.
5. Chotzakoglou 2003, figs. 42-59.
6. Chatzinikolaou 1957. Xyngopoulos 1977-79. Bock 1997. Chotzakoglou 2003.
7. Chatzinikolaou 1957, 227.
8. As in a wall-painting by Theophanis in the Anapafsas Monastery at Meteora in 1527. See Chatzidakis 1969-70, fig. 109.
9. Masseron 1933.
10. See Chatzinikolaou 1957, 225.



70. Saint Vlasios

40 x 29.5 x 2 cm.
Inv. no. IN 6981
Provenance: Church of Saint Vlasios, Vlorë
Date: 1833
Painter: Theophilos the monk from Mount Athos

In 1833, at a time when church-painting and engraving workshops were flourishing on the Holy Mountain of Athos, donors from Vlorë commissioned this icon of Saint Vlasios for the church named after him in their town, from the painter and monk Theophilos. According to the inscription: *Αὕτη ἡ ἁγία εἰκὼν τοῦ ἁγίου ἱερομάρτυρος Βλασίου Ἐχαράχθη Διὰ συνδρομῆς τῶν τιμιοτάτων Κ(υρί)ων Κωνσταντίνου / τζίκα κ(αὶ) ἀθανασίου Καλογέρου τῶν ἐξ ἀβλόνος Διὰ χειρὸς Θεοφίλου μ(ο)ν(α)χ(οῦ) Ἐν τῷ ἁγιωνύμῳ Ὄρος τοῦ Ἄθω Ἐν ἔτος 1833 φ(ε)βρ(ουα)ρ(ίου)* ('this holy icon of the saint and holy martyr Vlasios was engraved through the contribution of the most honourable Masters Konstantinos Tzikas and Athanasios Kaloyeros from Vlorë, by the hand of Theophilos, monk in the Holy Mountain of Athos in the year 1833, February').



Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΒΛΑCΙΟC ('Saint Vlasios'), bishop of Sebasteia, *an old man with a pointed beard,* who is particularly venerated in areas of Macedonia, Epiros and the Balkans in general, is depicted with naturalistically rendered facial features, seated on a baroque gold throne, wearing luxurious vestments and a prelate's mitre, and holding a closed gospel book in his hands.

The word 'engraved' in the inscription on the icon attests to its model having been an engraving. A later engraving of Saint Vlasios, executed in the year 1866, by one Ioannis, probably Ioannis Kaldis from Lesbos,[1] bears a striking similarity to the present icon, and the two are presumably based on a shared model.

The distinctly decorative tendency and the baroque features of the throne, together with an academic coldness in the execution of the icon, are associated with the work of the successors to the painters from Galatista in Chalkidiki, who maintained a workshop on Mount Athos.[2]

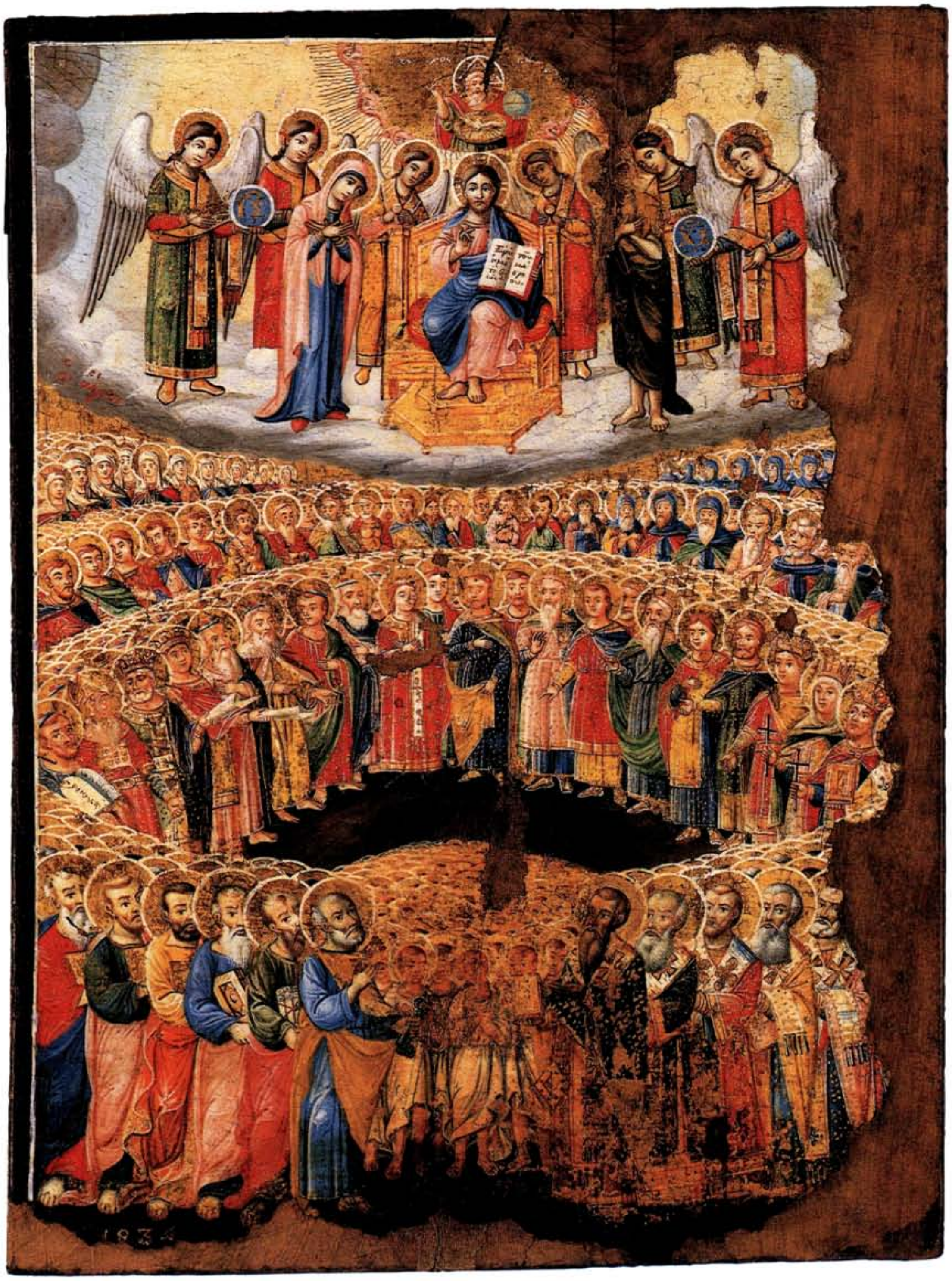
It is not known whether Theophilos, the monk from Mount Athos who signs the icon, was himself the engraver, like several painters of the period. He did belong, however, to a large number of painters from Mount Athos[3] whose works travelled to the entire Balkans and Russia in the 19th century.

Unpublished

1. Papastratou 1986, no. 204.
2. See, for example, the icon of Saint Spyridon from the Vatopedi Monastery, dating from 1866 (Papangelos 1996, fig. 266. Tsigaridas 2002, 324-325).
3. See Iliou 1999.

71. All Saints

47 x 36 x 2 cm.
Inv. no. IN 4838
Provenance: Unknown
Date: 1834



This icon with the band of All Saints and the date 1834 at the bottom has suffered considerable damage and loss of the painted surface at the edges.

The meaning of the representation, which is excerpted from the Last Judgement and depicts the Deisis, the choirs of the saints, and Paradise, lies in the mediation of the saints for the salvation of the faithful.

In the present icon, the *ἄναρχος πατὴρ* ('internal father') blesses, and the Virgin, Saint John the Baptist and six winged angels in clouds, pray to the enthroned Christ, who holds an open gospel book with the inscription: *Ἐγὼ εἰμὶ τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου* ('I am the light of the world'). Next are two semicircles with figures of women and men saints, and monks and hermits. In the central zone of the icon is the band of Christian patriarchs, saints, hierarchs and apostles. Between the apostle Peter, who holds large keys in his hands, and a hierarch with a gospel book, is a depiction of a small band of figures of the blessed in Paradise, dressed in white.

The iconography and style of the icon, the composition, the light-coloured faces, the vivid colours, the garments, and also the crowns worn by the saints directly recall western painting models that were incorporated into the aesthetic preferences of Orthodox Christians in the 19th century.

Unpublished

72. Saints Kosmas and Damian with a view of Rehovë (side 1)

The Holy Mountain of Athos (side 2)

37 x 27 x 2.7 cm.
Inv. no. IN 6248
Provenance: Church of Saint Nicholas, village of Rehovë, Erseke
Date: 1899
Painters: Georgios and Ioannis, monks of Mount Athos

In this very meticulous, luxurious icon from the church of Saint Nicholas at Rehovë, Saints Kosmas and Damian are depicted in a gold arched, gem-studded, delicately worked border supported on columns, and projected against the gold background of the icon. The saints are blessed by Christ from the clouds, while at the bottom, in front of low hills, is a representation of a view of Rehovë, the birthplace of the painters and donors of the icon. An inscription in "printed letters" on an unfolded scroll informs us that *Ἡ παροῦσα εἰκὼν τῶν Ἁγίων Ἀναργύρων ἐζωγραφήσθη διὰ χειρῶν τῶν αὐταδέλφων, κ(αὶ) Ἁγιογράφων / Γεωργίου Μοναχοῦ, κ(αὶ) Ἰωάννου Δημητρίου Ραχωβιτῶν, κ(αὶ) ἀφιερώθη παρ᾽ αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ / πανσέπτῳ Ναῷ τοῦ Ἁγ. Νικολάου εἰς τὸ χωρίον αὐτῶν Ράχωβα εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῶν.* ('the present icon was painted by the hands of the brothers and church painters / Georgios the monk and Ioannis son of Dimitrios, both of Rachova, and was dedicated by them in the most venerable church of Saint Nicholas in their village, Rachova, in their memory').

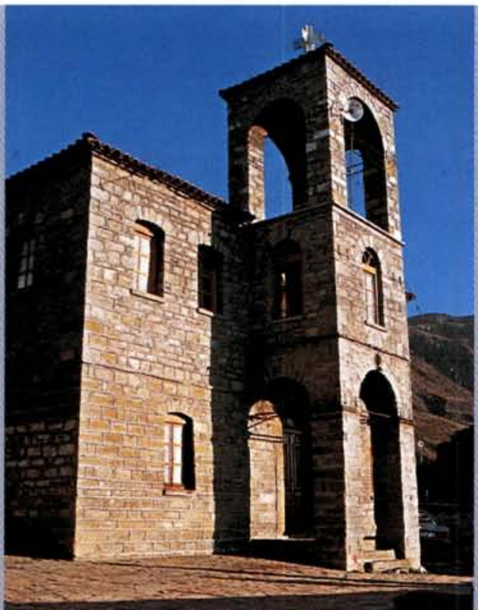
The healing saints, full-length and frontal and wearing full-length chitons with gold hems and luxurious *himatia* and with delicately worked gold haloes, hold the boxes containing their medicines. The rendering of the figures, with their sweet features, the treatment of the delicately executed garments, the neoclassical frame with the emphasis on gold, and the light, bright colours, all recall western-style and Russian-style painting trends on Mount Athos in the 19th century. Their models were engravings and coloured lithographs of neo-Russian art from the monasteries of Saint Panteleemon and Zographou which circulated widely amongst the Athonite painters of the period.[1]

The icon is completed by two interesting, original representations. In a natural setting rendered in shades of green, in which is the inscription: *Ἐν Ἁγίῳ Ὄρει Ἄθῳ 1899. Ἰουνίου 26* ('On the Holy Mount Athos 1899. June 26'), is depicted *τὸ Σχολεῖον, ἡ Ἐκκλησία, τὸ Σπήτι τῆς Τσήλιως* ('the School, the Church, the House of Tsilio') and other single- and two-storey buildings of Rehovë, which lies to the east of Erseke in the foothills of Grammos. Priests and laymen stroll between the fine stone school building, with its archways, and the aisleless basilica with its wooden bell-tower. In the two-storey house of "Tsilio" can be seen the aristocratic entrance and the wooden balcony railings. According to information supplied by residents of the village, the house belonged to the painters and Tsilio was their mother. On the back of the icon, which has the inscription: *Τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος Τοῦ ἄθωνος* ('The Holy Mountain of Athos') and the date *1899* beneath a cross, is depicted a naturalistic landscape with two large yachts, small boats and hillocks on the land, with little churches and monks felling trees for timber. The simple, picturesque representation is rendered with great expressivity and painterly freedom. This iconography, with emphasis on the rendering of the natural setting and the buildings, in the spirit of folk painting, derives from engravings and portable icons of the second half of the 18th century, which transmitted influences from western art to the religious painting of the

1. The school at Rehovë today.



2. The present church at Rehovë.




Ἐν Ἁγίῳ Ὄρει Ἄθῳ 1899. Ἰουνίου, 26.
τὸ Σχολεῖον
ἡ Ἐκκλησία
τὸ Σπῆτι τῆς Γσῆλεως.
Ἡ παροῦσα εἰκὼν τῶν Ἁγ. Ἀναργύρων ἐζωγραφήσθη διὰ χειρῶν τῶν αὐταδέλφων, κ. Ἁγιογράφων
Γεωργίου Μοναχοῦ, κ. Ἰωάννου Δημητρίου Ραχωβιτῶν, κ. ἀφιερώθη παρ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ -
πανσέπτῳ Ναῷ τοῦ Ἁγ. Νικολάου εἰς τὸ χωρίον αὐτῶν Ράχωβα εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῶν..

Orthodox east of the 19th century.[2] The manner in which the houses, the church, and also the seascape are rendered in this icon recalls views, mainly of Mount Athos, in engravings[3] and portable icons[4] of the same period. It was the prevailing practice in the 19th century to embellish religious subjects with depictions of landscapes, towns, monasteries and villages, in a conscious effort to capture reality, accompanied by explanatory comments, like the ones accompanying the buildings of the village in the present icon, which are testimony to memory and everyday reality.[5] In this particular icon, the two brothers, *church-painters* and monks of Mount Athos, according to the testimony of the modern inhabitants of Rehovë, broke new ground by depicting their mother's house along with the church and the school, and dedicated the icon in the village church, from where it was transferred to the Korcë Museum.

The western elements of their art, the naturalistic rendering, with influences from engravings, and the meticulous decoration, are typical of the painting and goldsmith's workshops that flourished on Mount Athos throughout the 19th century.[6]

Unpublished

1. Miliatzidou-Ioannou 1998.
2. Tsigaridas 2002, 326.
3. Papastratou 1986, 385ff. Simonopetritis 1999.
4. See *Θησαυροί του Αγίου Όρους* 1997, no. 4.14, no. 2.109.
5. See Papadopoulos 1999.
6. See also cat. no. 70.



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Index of the Artists

Athanasios of Korcë: 22, 27, 140, 146, 148, 158, 161, 162, 164, 166, 168, 170, 172, 174, 182, 186

Bathas Markos: 46
Bathas Thomas: 54
Bonasone: 174 note 7

Christos: 130
Colombo Ignazio: 164
Crivelli Carlo: 21

Georgios of Grammosta: 104
Georgios of Rehovë: 23, 200

Damaskinos Michael: 20, 46
David of Selenitza: 16, 22, 24, 116, 124, 130, 132, 134, 136
Dimitrios of Grammosta: 104
Dimitrios of Samarina: 23, 194
Dimitrios, son of papa-Ilias: 114
Dionysios of Fournas: 22, 132

Efthymios of Korcë: 22, 146
Eustathios of Grammosta: 104

Ioannis, colleague of Nikolaos, son of Onouphrios: 80
Ioannis of Grammosta, colleague of Georgios and Dimitrios: 104
Ioannis of Grammosta, son of papa-Theodoros: 104
Ioannis of Rehovë: 23, 200

Kaldis Ioannis: 198
Kaldis Konstantinos: 148
Kalliergis Georgios: 19
Karastoyanov Anastase: 149 note 19
Katelanos Frangos: 20, 21, 44, 72, 74, 84
Klontzas Georgios: 48, 52, 53
Kontaris Georgios: 21
Kontaris Frangos: 21
Konstantinos, hieromonk: 16, 21, 22, 116, 118, 120, 124, 126, 128, 131, 182
Konstantinos, teacher: 16, 116
Konstantinos of Korcë: 22, 27, 142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 152, 154, 161, 162, 172, 176, 182, 186
Konstantinos of Spatheia (Shpatit): 16, 23, 136, 140, 141

Michael of Megarovo: 182
Michael of Samarina: 23, 194
Michael of Zerma: 21
Michael the Greek: 21
Michelangelo: 174 note 6

Naum of Korcë: 146, 172
Nikolaos, son of Onouphrios: 16, 20, 64, 80, 82, 86

Onouphrios, priest and protopapas of Neokastro: 16, 20, 22, 24, 26, 58, 61, 64, 64 note 3, 65, 68, 70, 72, 74. 78, 80, 82, 84, 85, 104, 141 note 4
Onouphrios of Cyprus: 16, 20, 26, 64, 84, 85, 86, 93

Panselinos: 22
Petros, assistant of Georgios Tzetiris: 190
Petros, reader: 192
Piccini Isabella: 138, 140, 168 note 7
Pintoricchio: 174 note 6
Pozenalis Nikolaos: 192
Poulakis Theodoros: 20

Raphael: 174 note 6

Schiavone: 174 note 7
Skouratis Dimitrios: 104
Skoutaris Ioannis: 21, 104,
Sperantzas Spyridon: 180
Strelitzas-Bathas Theophanis: 20, 72, 74, 100, 196 note 8

Terpos: 22, 146, 154, 176, 178, 182, 186, 188
Theophilos, monk on Mount Athos: 198
Theotokopoulos Domenikos: 48
Tzanes Emmanuel: 166 note 1
Tzanfournaris Emmanuel: 54, 56, 166 note 1
Tzetiris Georgios: 23, 186, 190
Tzetiris Ioannis: 22, 23, 131 σημ. 9, 182, 184, 186, 188, 190
Tzetiris Konstantinos: 190
Tzetiris Naum: 190
Tzetiris Nikolaos: 190

Zefarović Christofor: 112, 138, 140, 148, 164, 166 note 2, 168

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